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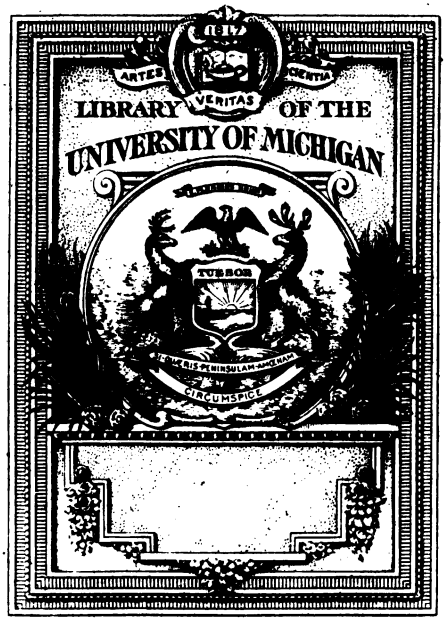
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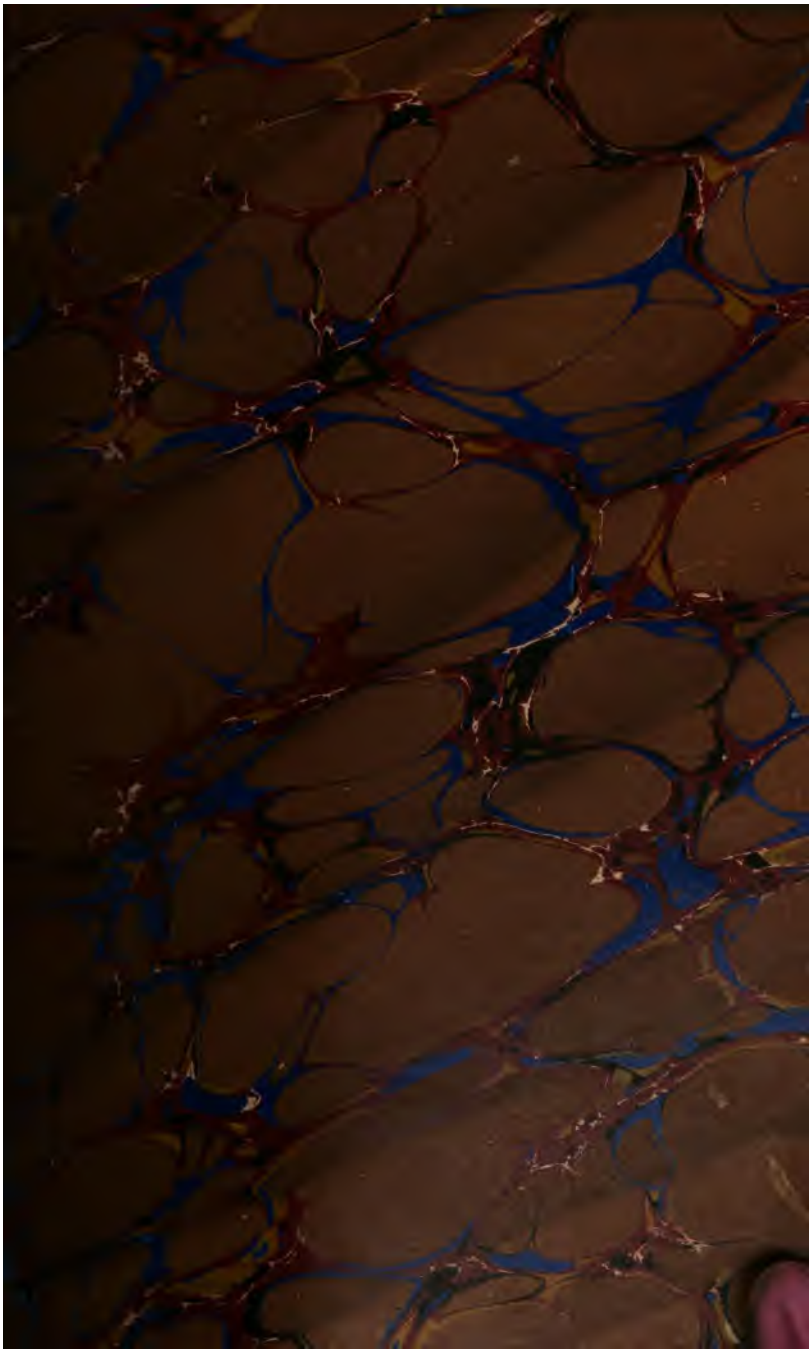

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BROUGHAM'S WORKS.

WORKS

OF

HENRY LORD BROUGHAM

VOL. II.

MEN OF LETTERS OF THE TIME OF GEORGE III.

EDINBURGH
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK
1872

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PREFACE.

THE general preface to the first volume renders it unnecessary to add anything introductory to the second, except for the purpose of calling the reader's attention to the following circumstances :—

1. Beside the Letters of Voltaire, communicated by Mr Stanford, and which were given in the former editions, there are some of his and one of Helvétius now inserted, which had been given in the French edition, having been kindly communicated by M. Feuillet, a gentleman of great respectability.

2. The family of La Beaumelle made strong representations against the manner in which he had been described, upon the authority of Voltaire's correspondence; and, after fully considering their statements, it appeared that in some material particulars an unjust account had been given, by Voltaire and his friends, of that person's history. Some change has therefore been made as to those particulars.

3. Of the judgment respecting Maupertuis's conduct no modification can be admitted. In that judgment there has long been an entire concurrence of all who have considered the facts. It appears that his merits as a mathematician had been rated somewhat below their just amount.

4. There are some valuable additions to the Life of Hume, from letters communicated by the gentleman above

mentioned, and still more from those which Colonel Mure has furnished, in his important publication of the 'Caldwell Papers.'

5. The note which has been added upon Archbishop Magee's marvellous judgment, pronounced against Hume's "wicked heart and weak head," seemed required by a strict regard to truth and justice—if, indeed, that judgment did not carry with it the certainty of unhesitating and instant reversal.

6. In discussing Hume's merits as an historian, too little reference had been made to Mr Brodie's most valuable work. It is, indeed, hardly fit that any one after him should handle the subject. There is perhaps no other instance of so complete a demonstration of historical errors—of an historian's errors through prejudice and negligence.

7. To the Life of Robertson is appended the greater part of the discourse on the nature of the pleasure derived from Science—Natural, Moral, and Political. In truth, the same argument is applicable to all the pleasures derived from literature; and Robertson afforded a remarkable example of one richly endowed with the powers of literary exertion, passing the period of his early youth in study and contemplation, and the greater part of his after life in the same pure enjoyments—a comparatively small portion of it only having been devoted to composition. It is a most gratifying reflection, that the doctrines contained in the first of the discourses referred to received the sanction of my revered friend, Dugald Stewart, in the last of his works, the Introduction to which was written a very short time before his decease.

LONDON, *April 5th*, 1855.

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MEN OF LETTERS

OF

THE TIME OF GEORGE III.

VOLTAIRE.

THIS name is so intimately connected in the minds of all men with infidelity, in the minds of most men with irreligion, and, in the minds of all who are not well-informed, with these qualities alone, that whoever undertakes to write his life and examine his claims to the vast reputation which all the hostile feelings excited by him against himself have never been able to destroy, or even materially to impair, has to labour under a great load of prejudice, and can hardly expect, by any detail of particulars, to obtain for his subject even common justice at the hands of the general reader. It becomes, therefore, necessary, in the outset, to remove a good deal of misunderstanding which, from the popular abuse of language, creates great confusion, in considering the history and weighing the merits of this extraordinary person.

The mention of Voltaire at once presents to every one the idea, not so much of a philosopher whose early inquiries have led him to doubt upon the foundations of religion, or even to disbelieve its truths, as of a bitter enemy to all belief in the evidence of things unseen—an enemy whose assaults were directed by malignant passions, aided by unscrupulous contri-

vances, and, above all, pressed by the unlawful weapon of ridicule, not the fair armoury of argument; in a word, he is regarded as a scoffer, not a reasoner. Akin to this is the other charge which makes us shudder by the imputation of blasphemy. Now, upon this manner of viewing Voltaire some things are to be explained, and some to be recalled, that they may be borne in mind during the discussion of his character.

Let us begin with the last charge, because, until it is removed, no attention is likely to be gained by anything that can be urged in defence or in extenuation. It is evident that, strictly speaking, blasphemy can only be committed by a person who believes in the existence and in the attributes of the Deity whom he impugns, either by ridicule or by reasoning. An atheist is wholly incapable of the crime. When he heaps epithets of abuse on the Creator, or turns His attributes into ridicule, he is assailing or scoffing at an empty name—at a being whom he believes to have no existence. In like manner if a deist, one who disbelieves in our Saviour being either the Son of God or sent by God as his prophet upon earth, shall argue against his miracles, or ridicule his mission or his person, he commits no blasphemy; for he firmly believes that Christ was a man like himself, and that he derived no authority from the Deity. Both the atheist and the deist are free from all guilt of blasphemy, that is, of all guilt towards the Deity or towards Christ. It is wholly another question whether or not they are guilty towards men. They plainly are so if they use topics calculated to wound the feelings of their neighbour who believes what they disbelieve; because religion, unlike other subjects of controversy, is one that mixes itself with the strongest feelings of the heart, and these must not be rudely outraged; because no man can be so perfectly certain that he is himself right and others are

wrong, as to justify him in thus making their opinions the subject of insolent laughter or scurrilous abuse; because it is our duty, even when fully convinced that we are dealing with error, and with dangerous error, to adopt such a course as will rather conciliate those we would gain over to the truth than make them shut their eyes to it by revolting their strongest feelings. Hence all law-givers have regarded such scoffing and insolent attacks on the religion professed by the great majority of their subjects as an offence justly punishable; although it may fairly be doubted whether the interposition of the law has ever had a tendency to protect religious belief itself, and it may even be suspected of having favoured the designs of those who impugn it, both by the reaction which such proceedings always occasion, and by the more cautious and successful methods of attack to which they usually drive the opponents of the national faith. But the offence, whether punished by the laws or not, is very incorrectly, though very generally, termed blasphemy, which is the offence of scoffing at the Deity, and assumes that the scoffer believes in him. Now it is barely possible that this offence may be committed; but it is the act of a mad rather than a bad man. If, indeed, any one really believing pretends to unbelief in order to indulge in scoffing, no language is too strong to express the reprobation he deserves, if he be in his senses; for he adds falsehood to a crime so horrible as almost to pass the bounds of belief—the frightful act of wilfully rebelling against the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth.—This is the *first* and worst form of the offence.

Secondly: The like guilt will, to a certain extent, be incurred by him who vents his ribaldry, upon the mere ground of his scepticism. On such a subject doubting is not enough. Unless there is an entire conviction in the mind that the popular belief is utterly groundless in the one case (that of attacking the

Deity) that there is a God, in the other (attacking Christianity) that there is a foundation for revelation, the guilt of blasphemy is incurred. He must be convinced, not merely doubt, or see reason for doubting; because no one has a right to speculate and take the chances of being innocent; guiltless if his doubts are well founded, guilty if they are not. The virtuous course here is the safe one. This is the moral of the fable in which the hermit answers the question of the rake, "Where are you, father, if there be not another world?" with the other question, "And you, my son, if there be?" We need not go so far as some have done, who on this ground contend that it is safer always to believe than to doubt, because belief must ever, to be of any value, depend on conviction. But we may assuredly hold that the better conduct is that which abstains from attack and offence, where the reasons hang in suspense—abstains because of the great guilt incurred if the doubts should prove groundless.

It is a *third* and lesser degree of this offence if a person carelessly gives way to a prevailing unbelief, and does not apply his faculties to the inquiry with that sober attention, that conscientious diligence, which its immense importance demands of all rational creatures. No man is accountable for the opinion he may form, the conclusion at which he may arrive, provided that he has taken due pains to inform his mind and fix his judgment. But for the conduct of his understanding he certainly is responsible. **He does more than err if he proceeds negligently in the inquiry; he does more than err if he allows any motive to sway his mind save the constant and single desire of finding the truth; he does more than err if he suffers the least influence of temper or of weak feeling to warp his judgment; he does more than err if he listens rather to ridicule than reason, unless it be that ridicule which springs from the contemplation of gross and**

manifest absurdity, and which is in truth argument and not ribaldry.

Now by these plain rules we must try Voltaire; and it is impossible to deny that he possessed such sufficient information, and applied his mind with such sufficient anxiety to the discovery of truth, as gave him a right to say that he had formed his opinions, how erroneous soever they might be, after inquiring, and not lightly. The story which is related of the Master in the Jesuits Seminary of Louis le Grand, where he was educated, having foretold that he would be the Corypheus of deists, if true, only proves that he had very early begun to think for himself; and whoever doubted the real presence or questioned the power of absolution, was at once set down for an infidel in those countries and in those times. It would be the fate of any young scholar in the Roman colleges at this day, especially were he to maintain his doubts with a show of cleverness; and were he to mingle the least wit with his argument, he would straightway be charged with blasphemy. But it must be added that an impression unfavourable to the truths of religion, and its uses, was made upon Voltaire's mind by the sight of its abuses, and by a consideration of the manifest errors inculcated in the Romish system. It is not enough to bring him within the blame above stated under the third head, that he was prejudiced in conducting his inquiries, if that prejudice proceeded from the errors of others which he had unjustly been summoned to believe. He is not to be blamed for having begun to doubt of the truths of Christianity in consequence of his attention having originally been directed to the foundations of the system by a view of the falsehoods which had been built upon those truths. Even if the bigotry of priests, the persecutions of sovereigns, the absurdities of a false faith, the grovelling superstitions of its votaries, their sufferings, bodily as well as mental, under false guides and

sordid pastors, roused his indignation and his pity, and these alternating emotions which first excited the spirit of inquiry, afterwards too much guided its course, we are not on that account to condemn him as severely as we should one who, from some personal spleen or individual interest, had suffered his judgment to be warped, and thus, as it were, lashed himself into disbelief of a system altogether pure administered by a simple, a disinterested, a venerable hierarchy.

Let us for a moment, independent of what may be termed the political view of the question—independent of all that regards the priesthood—consider the position of a person endowed with strong natural faculties, and not under the absolute dominion of his spiritual guides, nor prevented by their authority from exercising his reason; but, on the contrary, living at a moment when a spirit of free inquiry was beginning generally to prevail. He is told that the mystery of transubstantiation must be believed by him as a fact; he is told that there has been transmitted through a succession of ages from the apostles one of the Divine attributes, the power of pardoning sin, and that the laying a priest's hands on a layman gives him this miraculous power, to be exercised by him how guilty soever may be his own life, how absolutely null his own belief in the Divine being—nay, that this power has come through certain persons notorious atheists themselves, and whose lives were more scandalously profligate than anything that a modest tongue can describe. Presented to a vigorous mind, and not enforced by an authority which suffers no reasoning, or if enforced yet vainly so enforced, these dogmas and these claims became the subject of discussion, and were rejected almost as soon as they were understood. But in company with them were found many other doctrines and pretensions of a very different complexion, yet all of them were pronounced to have the same Divine original; and no

greater sanctity, no higher authority, no deeper veneration was claimed for them than for the real presence of the Creator at the summons of the priest, or the participation of that priest in the attributes of the Godhead. Let us be just towards the youth who was placed in these circumstances, and let us not condemn him for hastily rejecting the wheat with the chaff, before we endeavour to place ourselves in the same situation, asking what effect would be produced on our minds by severe denunciations against us should we doubt the priest's power, or refuse an explicit assent to his dogmas, which our reason, nay our senses rejected, while he refused all access to the inspired volumes which contained, or were said to contain, their only warrant. Rejecting the false doctrines, the chances are many that our faith would be shaken in the true. How many Protestants were made in the sixteenth century by the sale of indulgences! But how many unbelievers in Christianity have been made in all ages of the Church by the grosser errors of Rome, the exorbitant usurpations of her bishops, and the preposterous claims of her clergy.

It is also to be observed that Voltaire was, through his whole life, a sincere believer in the existence and attributes of the Deity. He was a firm and decided, and an openly declared unbeliever in Christianity, but he was, without any hesitation or any intermission, a theist. Then in examining the justice of the charge of blasphemy it is to be borne in mind that in all his numberless writings not one irreverent expression is to be found towards the Deity in whom he believed. He has more ably than most writers stated and illustrated the arguments in favour of that belief. He has consecrated some of his noblest poetry to celebrate the powers of the Godhead.* Whatever exception to this

* His dramatic compositions abound in such religious sentiments, clothed in the noblest language of poetical abstraction; but his celebrated verses, said to have been written extempore in a company that were admiring the

assertion may seem to be found in those writings will, on consideration, prove to be only apparent. It will be found that he is speaking only of the Deity as represented in systems of religion which he disbelieved; consequently he is there ridiculing only the idols, the work of men's hands, and the objects of superstitious worship, not the great Being in whom he believed and whom he adored. Even his 'Candide,' one of his greatest, perhaps his most perfect work, is only intended to expose the extravagance of the optimist doctrine; and however we may lament its tone in some sort, it is certainly not chargeable with ridiculing anything which a philosophic theist must necessarily believe.

But no one can exempt Voltaire from blame for the manner in which he attacked religious opinions, and outraged the feelings of believers. There he is without defence. Had all men been prepared to make the step which he had himself taken, the wound he inflicted would have been inconsiderable. But he must have written with the absolute certainty that their religious belief would long survive his assaults, and that consequently, to the vast majority of readers, they could only give pain. Indeed he must, in the moments of calm reflection, have been aware that reasoning, and not ridicule, is the proper remedy for religious error, and that no one can heartily embrace the infidel side of the great question merely because he has been made to join in a laugh at the expense of absurdities mixed up with the doctrines of believers; nay, even if he has

firmament one summer's evening, may be placed by the side of the finest compositions in that kind:—

"Tous ces vastes pays d'azur et de lumière,
Tirés du sein du vide, formés sans matière,
Arrondis sans compas, tournans sans pivot,
N'ont à peine coûté la dépense d'un mot."

When I once cited these to my illustrious friend Monti, who never would allow any poetical merit to the French, he objected to the last phrase, which he called the *pivot*, as low and prosaic, and as affording a proof of his constant position that the French have no poetical language.

been drawn into a laugh at the expense of some portion of those doctrines themselves. It is no vindication for Voltaire against this heavy charge, but it may afford some palliation of his offence, if we reflect on the very great difference between the ecclesiastical regimen under which he lived, and that with which we are acquainted in our Protestant community. Let no man severely condemn the untiring zeal of Voltaire, and the various forms of attack which he employed without measure against the religious institutions of his country, who is not prepared to say that he could have kept entire possession of his own temper, and never cast an eye of suspicion upon the substance of a religion thus abused, nor ever have employed against its perversions the weapons of declamation and of mockery; had he lived under the system which regarded Alexander Borgia as one of its spiritual guides, which bred up and maintained in all the riot of criminal excess an aristocracy having for one branch of its resources the spoils of the altar, which practised persecution as a favourite means of conviction, and cast into the flames a lad of eighteen, charged with laughing as its priests passed by. Such dreadful abuses were present to Voltaire's mind when he attacked the Romish superstitions, and exposed the profligacy, as well as the intolerance, of clerical usurpation. He unhappily suffered them to poison his mind upon the whole of that religion of which these were the abuse; and, when his zeal waxed hot against the whole system, it blinded him to the unfairness of the weapons with which he attacked both its evidences and its teachers.

The doctrine upon toleration, upon prosecutions for infidelity, even for blasphemy, which I have now ventured to propound, is supported by the very highest authority among persons of the most acknowledged piety, and of the warmest zeal for the interests of religion. It was the constant maxim of my revered friend, Mr. Wilberforce, that no man should be prosecuted for

his attacks upon religion. He gave this opinion in Parliament; and he was wont to say, that the ground of it was his belief in the truths of religion. "If religion be, as I believe it, true, it has nothing to fear from any such assaults. But it may be injured by the secular arm interfering." Just so the well-known Duke of Queensberry, when conversing upon the writings of Paine, and other assailants of the constitution, made answer to a sycophant, who said of those attacks, "And so false too."—"No," said his Grace, "not at all: they are true, and that is their danger, and the reason I desire to see them put down by the law; were they false, I should not mind them at all."

In the like spirit we have the unsuspected testimony of men like Dr. Lardner and Bishop Jeremy Taylor, Christians whose piety and virtue, and whose orthodoxy, are beyond all suspicion:—"The proper punishment," says Lardner, "of a low, mean, indecent, scurrilous way of writing, seems to be neglect, contempt, scorn, and final indignation." (*Letter to the Bishop of Chester on the Prosecution of Woolston*, 1729).—"Blasphemy" (says Taylor) "is *in aliena republica*, a matter of another world. You may as well cure the colic by brushing a man's clothes, or fill a man's belly with a syllogism, as prosecute for blasphemy. Some men have believed it the more as being provoked into a confidence and vexed into a resolution. Force in matters of opinion can do no good, but is very apt to do hurt; for no man can change his opinion when he will. But if a man cannot change his opinion when he list, nor ever does heartily or resolutely but when he cannot do otherwise, then to use force may make him a hypocrite, but never to be a right believer; and so, instead of erecting a trophy to God and true religion, we build a monument for the devil." (*Liberty of Prophesying*, s. xiii. 19.)—Bishop Warburton says plainly, "he should have been ashamed of even projecting to write in defence of Moses had he not thought that all infidels

had equal liberty to attack him." (*Dedication to the Divine Legation.*)

These things being premised, we may now proceed with more ease and less interruption from controversial topics, to examine the extraordinary history of this eminent person.

He was the son of the Sieur Arouet, a person of respectable family, filling the place of treasurer in the Chamber of Accounts, an exchequer office of considerable emolument. His mother was of a noble family, that of d'Aumart. A small estate possessed by the father was called Voltaire; and the custom in those days being for the younger children of wealthy commoners to take the name of their estate, leaving the family name to the eldest, François Marie, as the younger of two sons, took the name of Voltaire, which on his brother's death many years after he did not change. He was born the 20th of February, 1694; and being so feeble that his life was not expected, he was baptised immediately, the christening being deferred till the 22d of November following. This has given rise to doubts at which of the two periods his birth took place. It has frequently been remarked as a singular circumstance, that two eminent authors who have lived to extreme old age, Fontenelle and Voltaire, were both thus unlikely at their birth to live at all, both being born almost in a dying condition; yet not only did they enjoy unusually long life, but they retained their great faculties entire to the last, although the one died in his eighty-fifth year, and the other lived to within a few weeks of a hundred.

When only twelve years of age, he distinguished himself by the excellence of some begging verses to the Dauphin from an invalid who had served under the prince, and who applied for this help to the Master of the College of Louis le Grand, where Voltaire then was. The master being busy, handed him over to his promising scholar, as being quite able to do what was

desired. The lines are very good, and the idea sufficiently happy. The old soldier is made to say that the different heathen gods having given Monseigneur various gifts at his birth, a more beneficent Deity had provided the petitioner's Christmas-box by bestowing on their favourite the boon of generosity. It is known that this incident procured for him the favour of the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, then in her ninetieth year, and to whom he was presented by his godfather, the Abbé de Châteauneuf. She died soon after, and left him a legacy of 2,000 francs, to buy books with.* When his father found that he was introduced by the Abbé into this and other fashionable society, and that he was cultivating his taste for poetry, he became alarmed for his success in life, having destined him for the profession of the law. He placed him, therefore, in a school of jurisprudence, intending to purchase for him a President's place, according to the practice of the French bar in those days. Voltaire, however, had already begun to taste the sweets of classical study, and he had lived in a society frequented by the Abbé his godfather, who appears to have been a person of loose morals and of sceptical opinions. The extreme bigotry which Madame de Maintenon had introduced into the

* He has, in a letter which remains (Mélanges Lit., ii. 294), recorded many particulars of her extraordinary life and great qualities. Her portrait by St. Evremond is well known; it is happily drawn:—

"L'indulgente et sage Nature
A formé l'ame de Ninon
De la volupté d'Epicure,
Et de la vertu de Caton."

In consequence of a quarrel between two of her lovers there was a proposition of sending her to a convent of "*Filles repenties:*" she said that would not suit her, as she was "*ni fille, ni repentie.*" The provident parents in good society used to place their sons under her patronage to form them for polite company. Of one Renaud, a coxcomb whom she was said to have formed, she observed, "Qu'elle faisait comme Dieu, qui s'était repenti d'avoir fait l'homme." When her old and intimate friend, Madame de Maintenon, became *dévote*, and offered to provide handsomely for her would she but follow her example, her answer was, "Je n'ai nul besoin ni de fortune, ni de masque."

Court of Versailles when the declining faculties and health of Louis XIV. had rendered him the victim of superstitious terrors, and, through these, the tool of priestly intolerance, gave rise to a reaction in the gay circles of Paris; and in resisting the inroads of that gloom by which the asceticism of the ancient mistress had signalised her late repentance, the Contis, the Chaulieus, the Sullys, the La Fères, carried their opposition further than they perhaps at first intended, or even afterwards were aware of: they patronised universal discussion, even of the most sacred subjects, and best received opinions, until a fashion of free thinking was set; and from being at first revolted at the intolerance which destroyed Catinat at Court, notwithstanding his genius and his probity, on account of his supposed infidelity, and ascribed the defeats of Vendôme to his occasional absence from mass, without reflecting that Marlborough was a heretic and Eugene a deist; the frequenters of the most polished society in the world became accustomed to believe more sparingly than Catinat, and see less of the Host than Vendôme.

It was in this association that Voltaire, then a boy, became inured to the oblivion both of his law books and of his religious principles, when his parent made a last effort to save him, and restore him to the learned profession, and to the bosom of the church, by sending him as page or attaché to the French ambassador at the Hague, a near kinsman of the Abbé Châteauneuf. He there fell in love with the daughter of a profligate woman, Madame Dunoyer, who considering the match a bad one, had him sent home by the ambassador, and published his love letters, which are admitted to have no merit. His father would only receive him on condition of his consenting to serve in a notary's office. A friend of the family, M. de Caumartin, had compassion on the sufferings which this arrangement occasioned, and obtained permission to have him pass some months in his country residence at St. Ange. The

Bishop Caumartin, then an elderly man, and who had lived with all the more learned persons of the past age, excited him, by his conversation upon the Sullys and the Henrys, to meditate two of his greatest works, his epic poem and his history.

The death of Louis, which happened on Voltaire's return to Paris, gave rise to a very indecent expression of public joy, and to many libels upon his memory. One of these being without any foundation ascribed to him, his confinement in the Bastille was the consequence. Here, however, his spirit continued unbroken. He sketched the poem of the 'Ligue,' afterwards called the 'Henriade;' and he corrected a tragedy, 'Œdipe,' which he had written several years before, when only eighteen years old. The imprisonment being in the course of a few weeks found to be entirely illegal and vexatious, the Regent ordered his immediate liberation, with a sum of money by way of compensation. The tragedy was not acted till two years after, in 1718; and it is a singular fact, that when, in 1713, it had been in its original imperfect state submitted to Dacier, with the pedantry of his nature he strongly recommended the introduction of choruses, to be sung after the manner of the Greek tragedy. A letter of his is still extant, giving this sage and practical counsel; but the Greek critic was not the only pedant. When in 1762, Voltaire had gained the famous cause of Sirven, through the exertions of M. Merville, a leading advocate of Toulouse, he refused all pecuniary remuneration, but desired as his reward, that his client would now consent to add choruses to the 'Œdipe.'

How powerful was the sentiment of ambition in his nature appears not merely from his bold attempt at a tragedy—audaxque juventâ—in his eighteenth year, but from his adventurous competition for the prize of poetry proposed by the Académie Française a year or two before; the king having, in the superstition of his declining age, at length resolved to fulfil the promise

of his predecessor by decorating the altar of Notre Dame. This formed the subject of the ode, which was rejected in favour of a ridiculous piece by the Abbé Dujarri; so that it is a singular fact in Voltaire's history that his first published work was a devotional poem.

The tragedy of 'Œdipe' was successful; and Lamotte, then of established reputation, but which with ordinary poets is by no means a security against jealousy, had the noble candour to declare that this tragedy gave sure promise of a successor to Corneille and Racine. But the prejudices of the stage forced Voltaire to introduce a love scene against his better judgment, which had decided against the incongruous mixture of tenderness with the horrors of the subject. It is related of him, and he has himself countenanced the anecdote, that in the giddiness of youth, and plunged in dissipation, he was insensible to the dangers of failure, and felt so little of the nervous agitation belonging to a dramatic author's first night, as to be seen carrying in mockery the train of the High Priest. Madame la Maréchale de Villars, then at the head of Parisian society, asked who that young man was, who appeared as if trying to have the play damned; and upon being told that it was neither more nor less than the author himself, she was so struck with the originality that she desired to have him presented to her. Becoming one of her circle, he conceived for her the first and probably the only passion which he ever seriously felt. His love was unsuccessful; but it interrupted his studies, nor did he ever after allude to it without a feeling of regret bordering upon remorse.

The merits of 'Œdipe' no longer form a debateable question. If the continued representation for forty-five nights had left any doubt upon this subject, the concurrent voices of so many different audiences during the hundred years and upwards that it has kept possession of the stage pronounce a sentence from

which there is no appeal.* For an author of any age it is a fine performance; for a young man of eighteen or nineteen, a truly wonderful one; promising, perhaps, considerably greater dramatic success than even the author of 'Zaire' ever attained. But he unfortunately preferred writing *multa* rather than *multum;* and this remark is more peculiarly applicable to his dramatic compositions than to any of his other important efforts.

The distinguishing beauty of the 'Œdipe' is its fervid, correct, and powerful declamation; and though the most magnificent passage be taken from Sophocles, there are numberless others of undoubted originality. Into some of the inconsistencies, and even absurdities, of the Greek plot he has fallen, and the most of whatever is good in that plot certainly is not his own. But no one who has either seen the representation or read the poem, can easily forget the powerful impression which its diction leaves on the mind. Some of the passages are marked by their supposed allusion to the priesthood of his own times; and one especially is generally given as his first declaration of war against the sacred order:—

> "Nos prêtres ne sont point ce qu'un vain peuple pense—
> Notre crédulité fait toute leur science."—(Act iv. sc. 4.)

But surely, when we observe that this is only the summing up of an invective satirical, but perfectly just against the Pagan superstitions which are specified, we may well suppose, that had not his future writings

* The judgments pronounced by the audience on a first representation are a very different test, being necessarily much more subject to accident, to caprice, and to party manœuvres. The striking example of the 'Britannicus,' nay, even of the 'Phèdre' and the 'Athalie' themselves (these two now admitted on all hands to be Racine's masterpieces), may well guard us against yielding to the first expressions of the vox populi. Perhaps even the great union of opinion in France, placing Corneille so far above Racine, is another instance of erroneous judgment produced by accidental circumstances. Had Racine preceded Corneille, would the decision have been the same? There may, however, be some ground for giving the same precedence to the latter that we yield to Massillon and Bourdaloue over Bossuet.

supplied the commentary, no one could have deemed the allusion in these fine lines irreverent to the hierarchy of Rome. Now, it is true, they are sufficiently marked; and in consequence of that commentary they never fail to be applied. I recollect the thunder of applause which they called forth in 1814, when I saw this play during the first restoration. The court of Louis XVIII. was supposed to favour the Church in an especial manner, and this pointed the public attention more peculiarly to such allusions. Two other lines were productive of nearly equal applause:—

"Un prêtre, quel qu'il soit, quelque Dieu qui l'inspire,
Doit prier pour ses rois, et non pas les maudire."—(Act iii. sc. 3.)

The reason of this excitement was, that the lines contain a reproof of the High Priest's insolence, and that was sufficient. On another occasion, the same season, I heard much louder applause in that theatre. It was of the lines,

"Le premier qui fût roi, fût un soldat heureux:
Qui sert bien son pays n'a pas besoin d'aïeux."

The reference was instantly made to Napoleon, and the piece could hardly proceed for the boisterous plaudits.

It is certain that the tragedies of Voltaire are the works of an extraordinary genius, and that only a great poet could have produced them; but it is equally certain that they are deficient for the most part in that which makes the drama powerful over the feelings,—real pathos, real passion, whether of tenderness, of terror, or of horror. The plots of some are admirably contrived; the diction of all is pure and animated; in most passages it is pointed, and in many it is striking, grand, impressive; the characters are frequently well imagined and pourtrayed, though without sufficient discrimination; and thus often running one into another, from the uniformity of the language, terse, epigrammatic, powerful, which all alike speak. Nor are there

wanting situations of great effect, and single passages of thrilling force; but, after all, the heart is not there; the deep feeling, which is the parent of all true eloquence as well as all true poetry, didactic and satirical excepted, is rarely perceived; it is rather rhetoric than eloquence, or, at least, rather eloquence than poetry. It is declamation of a high order in rhyme; no blank verse, indeed, can be borne on the French stage, or even in the French tongue; it is not fine dramatic composition: the periods roll from the mouth, they do not spring from the breast; there is more light than heat; the head rather than the heart is at work.

It seems that if there be any exception to this remark, we must look for it in the 'Zaire,' his most perfect piece, although, marvellous to tell, it was written in two-and-twenty days. In my humble opinion, it is certainly obnoxious to the same general objection, though less than any of his other pieces; yet it is truly a noble performance, and it unites many of the great requisites of dramatic excellence. The plot, which he tells us was the work of a single day, is one of the most admirable ever contrived for the stage, and it is a pure creation of fancy. Nothing can be conceived more full of interest and life and spirit—nothing more striking than the combinations and the positions to which it gives rise, while at the same time it is quite natural, quite easy to conceive, in no particular violating probability. Nor can anything be more happy or more judicious than the manner in which we are, at the very first, brought into the middle of the story, and yet soon find it unravelled and presented before our eyes without long and loaded narrative retrospects. Then the characters are truly drawn with a master's hand, and sustained perfectly and throughout both in word and in deed. Orosman, uniting the humanized feelings of an amiable European with the unavoidable remains of the Oriental nature, ambitious, and breathing war, more than becomes our character, yet generous and

simple-minded; to men imperious, but as it were by starts, when the Tartar predominates; to woman delicate and tender, as if the Goth or the Celt prevailed in the harem; unable to eradicate the jealousy of the East, yet, like a European, too proud not to be ashamed of it as a degradation, and thus subduing it in all instances but one, when he is hurried away by the Asiatic temperament and strikes the fatal blow, which cannot lessen our admiration, nor even wholly destroy our esteem. The generous nature of Nourestan and Lusignan excites our regard, and, perhaps, alone of all the perfect characters in epic or in dramatic poetry, they are no way tiresome or flat. But Zaire herself, unlike other heroines, is, if not the first, at least equal to the first, of the personages in touching the reader and engaging his affections. Nothing can be conceived more tender; and the conflict between her passion for the Sultan and her affection for her family, between her acquired duty to the crescent and her hereditary inclination to the cross, is most beautifully managed. Of detailed passages it would be endless to make an enumeration, but some may be shortly marked. Few things in poetry are finer than Lusignan's simple answer to Chatillon, who tells him that he was impotent to save his children:

"*C.* Mon bras chargé de fers ne les put pas secourir.
L. Hélas! et j'étais père, et je ne pus mourir."

Nourestan's indignation, the boiling over of a fanatical crusader's enthusiasm against his sister for falling in love with an infidel prince (Act iii. sc. 4,) is a truly noble piece of declamation. Orosman's proud feeling towards the sex, for the first time following the Asiatic course (Act iii. sc. 7,) is not less finely expressed:

"Mais il est trop honteux de craindre une maîtresse—
Aux mœurs de l'Occident laissons cette bassesse!
Ce sexe dangereux, qui veut tout asservir,
S'il commande en Europe, ici doit obéir."

The famous passage "Zaire, vous pleurez?" which electrified the audience in France, and never fails still to produce this effect, needs not be specified, except for the purpose of noting, that the exclamation "Zaire, vous m'aimez!" is hardly less touching, or less powerful to paint the Sultan's character.

Next to 'Zaire' the 'Mérope' certainly is Voltaire's finest drama; and its success at first was even greater than that of 'Zaire.' At one part the audience were so intoxicated with admiration, that they called out for Voltaire, and forced him to show himself—the first time that the honour was ever bestowed, which has now become worthless, because lavished on the author of every successful piece. But the multitude went a step further in his case, and insisted upon the beautiful daughter-in-law of the Maréchale de Villars publicly saluting him; a requisition savouring much more of indecorum than enthusiasm.

It is impossible either to deny the great merits of the 'Mérope,' or to doubt its marked inferiority to 'Zaire.' The composition, and, in general, the execution, must be confessed to be in the best manner of that eloquence, or rather rhetoric, which I have ventured to describe as the character of Voltaire's tragedies; but it is not, like 'Zaire,' at least many portions of 'Zaire,' a successful incursion into the adjoining, though far loftier domain of feeling; in a word, the high region of fine verse is here under the author's power; the higher region of poetry does not submit to his control. The fable is excellently pursued; while there is little original or very happy in the characters, of which the principal one is so possessed by a feeling of love and anxiety for a son whom she had barely seen, that it is difficult to sympathise with the leading sentiment of the piece. Fine passages no doubt abound, and bursts (*mouvemens*) of an impressive, and of a surprising and even elevating kind, are occasionally introduced, though by far the finest is imitated professedly from the 'Mérope' of

Maffei—it is when Egisthe mentions his mother; and Merope then believing that he had murdered her son, that is himself, exclaims—

> "Barbare! il te reste une mère!
> Je serois mère encore sans toi," &c.—(Act iii. sc. 4.)

The verses on a military usurper have been already cited. Lines such as the concluding couplet of the second act are not rarely scattered through the piece, and never fail to produce a great effect in the delivery. They have, like the former, been not rarely applied to Napoleon.

> "Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'espoir,
> La vie est un opprobre, et la mort un devoir."

These, the 'Zaire' and 'Mérope,' seem, beyond all comparison, and without any doubt, to be the finest of Voltaire's dramatic works. His own favourite, however, appears to have been the 'Catiline,' or 'Rome Sauvée.' He dwells with great complacency on its having been more applauded than 'Zaire' on its first representation, and accounts for its not having, like 'Zaire,' kept possession of the stage, by observing that nobody now-a-days conspires, but every one has loved. The superiority of this to its rival, the 'Catiline' of Crebillon, may also be admitted; nor can we deny it a considerable degree of that which constituted Voltaire's dramatic merit, his eloquence far more remarkable than his poetry. It may also be admitted that if this criticism can ever lose its force, it must be in a composition of which the hero is Cicero;—nor, if the eloquence were of a higher order,—if it were fervid and impassioned,—if it were warm from the heart, and addressed and moved the feelings,—would the decision of which the author appears to complain ever have gone forth against it. But the tragedy has, beside many other faults, that of frigid declamation, in pure diction, often happy, generally pointed, even

to epigram, but still cold and artificial. There is also to be remarked in the piece a singular want of judgment. The history of Catiline is not professed to be followed, yet all the departures from it are in diminution of the dramatic interest; and nothing can be less correct than the assertion which accompanies the confession that the facts of the story are changed—it is not true, or anything like the truth, that the "genius and the character of Cicero, Catiline, Cato, and Cæsar, are faithfully painted." Can anything be less excusable, whether we regard dramatic interest or the truth of history, than representing Catiline as uxorious, and all but won over to abandon his enterprise by his wife's remonstrances and tears? The absurdity of making Cæsar put down the conspiracy, and supersede C. Antonius and Petreius in the command at the battle in which Catiline fell, requires no comment. This, and Cæsar's rhodomontade before setting out, his embracing Cicero, and vowing that he goes either to die, or to justify the Consul's good opinion of him, and his being overpersuaded by a speech of Cicero, not merely to abandon Catiline but to destroy him, is as utterly unlike that great man's character as anything that can well be imagined. For Cato, it is surely as little in his manner as can be, to tell Cicero that Rome calls him her father and her avenger; and that Envy at his feet trembles and adores him:

"Et l'Envie à tes pieds t'admire avec terreur."

But the grand defect of this piece is the absurd and hopeless attempt of bringing Cicero upon the stage. Brutus and Antony had been successfully so dealt with by Shakspeare; but they were men of action; Cicero, a mere orator, never could be endured as the hero of a piece; eloquence, the triumphs of the tongue, are wholly unfitted to form the subject of a drama. Voltaire has endeavoured to supply the defect by making Catiline murder not his step-son, which he was

supposed to have done, but his father-in-law, a certain Nonnius, which no one ever dreamt of but the poet; and his wife, in her grief and rage, puts herself to death by stabbing herself on the stage.

But if we desire to perceive how great is Voltaire's failure, we must not only consider what he has done to make his drama cold and uninteresting, but what materials he had within his reach, and avoided using. Few narratives present so lively, nay, so dramatic a picture as that of Sallust. The diction is fine; but had Livy written it, his exquisite and dignified style would have placed the Catiline conspiracy at the head of historical works. The character of Catiline, better given in some parts of Cicero, particularly the Pro Sulla, Pro Cœlio, and Pro Muræna; his dark, designing, and unscrupulous nature; his utter profligacy of life and manners; his fierce temper; his untameable ambition; his powers, as well of body as of mind; his invincible courage—all form a personage made for stage effect, and only prevented from producing it in the highest degree by such preposterous conceits as making him tender-hearted to his wife, a thing to have been carefully avoided by the dramatist, even if his letter, given by Sallust, shows some care for that very profligate woman and his child. But then what can be finer than the meeting holden in a remote recess of his house, and his address under cloud of night to his associates—to say nothing of the dark suspicion thrown out by the historian, that he made them drink human blood mixed with their wine when he swore them to the enterprise!* But the speech is very fine—bold, abrupt, simple, concise, eminently calculated for the occasion:—"Quin igitur, expergiscemini? En illa, illa quam sæpe optastis, libertas! Fortuna omnia victoribus præmia posuit: res tempus, pericula, egestas, belli spolia magnifica,

* Fuere eâ tempestate qui dicerent.—(Cap. xxii.)

magis quam oratio mea vos hortentur. Vel imperatore, vel milite me utimine. Neque animus, neque corpus a vobis aberit." The other speech which he makes on the eve of the fight is also noble and characteristic:—"Quod si virtuti vestræ fortuna inviderit, cavete inulte animam amittatis; neu capti potius sicuti pecora trucidemini, quam virorum, more pugnantes, cruentam atque luctuosam victoriam hostibus relinquatis."* With such noble materials, Voltaire makes as poor a speech as it was possible to manufacture—as wordy and unimpressive. He calls his conspirators "an assemblage of the greatest of human kind;" and that being not enough, they are "conquerors of kings—avengers of their countrymen—his true friends, his equals, his supports." He tells them that "they had subdued Tigranes and Mithridates, and made the Euphrates red with their blood, only to make worthless senators proud, who, as a recompense, allowed the conspirators to adore their persons at a distance." How much finer is the simple description in Sallust!—"The Patricians squander away their wealth in building out the sea, and levelling mountains, while we are without the necessaries of life!" But the whole comparison is to the same effect.

Then, can anything be finer than the scene in the Senate where Cicero made his first famous speech? First the historian paints Catiline as full of dissimulation, and acting the part of a suppliant, with downcast look and submissive voice, appealing to the senators whether it was likely a man of his rank and former services should be guilty of the things laid to his charge, while the state was defended by "Marcus Tullius Cicero! inquilinus civis urbis Romæ!" (one living in a hired lodging). Thereupon a loud cry was raised against him, and he was saluted with the name of rebel and parricide. "Tum ille furibundus—'Quoniam

* Cap lviii.

quidem circumventus, inquit, ab inimicis, præceps agor, incendium meum ruinâ extinguam.' "*

Thus the Catiline of Sallust; but he of Voltaire, after saying his part is taken, and calling his followers to come away, departs quietly enough—not the *furibundus proripuit* of Sallust, or even the *triumphans gaudio erupit* of Tully—but

> "Vous, sénat, incertain, qui venez de m'entendre,
> Choisissez à loisir le parti qu'il faut prendre."

And so it is throughout; the same contrast between the tame, feeble, vague verses of the modern poet, and the spirited, the picturesque of the ancient historian, really a finer poet than he who would needs dramatise the story into prose. The battle so exquisitely painted by Sallust could not indeed be rendered on the stage, but something of the noble speech that preceded might have been given. Then how tamely does Cæsar, in recounting the fight, render the "Memor generis atque pristinæ dignitatis, in confertissimos hostes incurrit," and the sad and striking scene displayed after the battle, when "quisque quem pugnando locum ceperat eum amissâ animâ corpore tegebat;" but Catiline, on the contrary, was found "longe a suis inter hostium cadavera, paululum etiam spirans, ferociamque animi quam habuerat vivus in voltu retinens."† This is far from the greatest failure of Voltaire, but it is a failure, and a failure by departing from the admirable simplicity of the original.

> "Catiline terrible au milieu du carnage,
> Entouré d'ennemis immolés à sa rage,

* Cap. xxxi. Cicero (pro Murænа, c. xxv.) gives a different account, but less picturesque: "erupit senatû triumphans gaudio;" and adds, that he had some days before used the famous words in answer to a threat of prosecution from Cato; but Voltaire was at perfect liberty to choose either version of the fact, and he preferred his own mean and most tame design.

† One never can read this great masterpiece of narrative without recollecting Quinctilian's phrase, "Salustii immortalem velocitatem."

Sanglant, couvert de traits, et combattant toujours,
Dans nos rangs éclairés a terminé ses jours.
Sur des morts entassés l'effroi de Rome expire:
Romain, je le condamne; et soldat, je l'admire."

It may here be observed that the admirable trait of each soldier falling where he fought, but the terrible chief far apart from all his men, because in advance of them all, being first left out, the extraordinary effect of *paululum etiam spirans* where he had fallen, and the *ferociam animi voltu retinens*, are equally abandoned. One is really tempted to question (as some have questioned) Voltaire's thorough acquaintance with the force of the Latin tongue. Assuredly he very differently judges the eloquence of Massillon, in a language of which, like him, he was so accomplished a master.

It would be unjust to close the 'Rome Sauvée' without awarding just praise to many of its detached parts, and especially of the lines, worthy of Cicero himself, which he is made to pronounce—

"Romains, j'aime la gloire, et ne veux point m'en taire!
Des travaux des humains, c'est le digne salaire:
Sénat! en vous servant, il la faut acheter;
Qui n'ose la vouloir, n'ose la mériter!"

All accounts agree that when Voltaire, at the first representation of the piece in a private theatre, acted this part, his enthusiastic delivery of these words, conveying a sentiment so intimately mixed with his whole soul, produced such an effect that the audience could hardly tell if it was the poet or the great orator they heard.

The conspiracy of Catiline has afforded not only to Crebillon but to our Ben Jonson the subject of a tragedy. He copies, by translating, Sallust and Cicero; but he does not preserve the fire of the one, or the picturesque effect of the other. The speech to the conspirators is but poorly rendered. Thus the *Quin expergiscemini?* by being made an exhortation instead of a reproach, sinks into

"Wake, wake, brave friends,
And meet the liberty you oft have wished for."

How much finer the literal version, "Why wake ye not? See! see! that liberty you so often have wished for." Nothing can be more poor than the version in blank verse of the first Catilinarian, unless perhaps it be Catiline's exclamation on rushing forth from the Senate—

"I will not burn without my funeral pile:
It shall be in the common fire rather than mine own,
For fall I will with all, ere fall alone."

Nor is the speech before the battle better rendered; thus—

"And if our destiny envy our virtue
The honour of the day, yet let us vow
To sell ourselves at such a price as may
Undo the world to buy us, and make Fate,
While she tempts ours, fear her own estate."

A piece of rant and fustian which the poet probably thought Sallust had not the genius to think of. The description of Catiline's body after the battle is not perhaps quite so bad, nor the idea lent to the historian so feeble—

"Yet did his look retain
Some of its fierceness, and his hands still moved,
As if he laboured yet to grasp the state
With these rebellious parts."

Altogether the piece is immeasurably inferior to Voltaire's in every part on which a comparison can be made. In learning, it is true, the Frenchman is far surpassed, who might have written his 'Catiline' without ever having read a line either of the orator or of the historian; but the Englishman's far greater failure is not excused by his attempt being the more learned.

Of the inferior dramas, 'Alzire' and 'Mahomet' or 'Le Fanatisme' are certainly the best; but they are far

from being equal to the 'Zaire' and 'Mérope,' though greatly superior to the 'Catiline.' The object of both is to present fanaticism in its most dangerous shape—in the union which it not unfrequently forms with great and even with good qualities. This object is well attained, and there is also a mixture of softness in the characters of Alzire and Palmire which forms a pleasing relief to the harsher features of Mahomet, Gusman, and Zamore. Both tragedies contain fine passages of declamation; and the picture of the revolting and hateful character of the Spaniards (in the New World, at least)—that execrable and yet despicable mixture of cruelty and fanaticism, fraud and avarice—with which 'Alzire' opens, is not surpassed in moral descriptive poetry. 'Alzire' was perfectly successful from the first; but the favour which it then enjoyed has worn out. 'Mahomet' was at first only performed at Lîle, and during its first representation the news of Frederick's victory at Molwitz having been received by Voltaire, he interrupted the performance to make it known, saying to those around him, "You'll see, that piece of Molwitz will make mine pass." At Paris it was forbidden by the timidity of Cardinal Fleury, alarmed by some passages. Voltaire presented it to the Pope Benedict XIV. (Lambertini), accompanying it with two very indifferent Latin verses as an inscription for his Holiness's portrait. He received an answer full of kindness and liberality from that eminent priest, who also mentioned that an ignorant Frenchman had objected to the quantity of *Hic* in the Latin lines, and that he had put him down with two lines of Virgil, showing it to be either long or short, though he had not read Virgil for fifty years. Voltaire replied that a third verse should have been given, and inscribed on the Pope's picture by all his subjects—

"Hic vir, hic est tibi quem promitti sæpius audis;"

adding very inaccurately, if not ignorantly, that the

word is both long and short in this line, whereas it is only long by position.

The late Lord Grantley told me that when he was a young man fresh from Eton, he passed a few days at Ferney, and found Voltaire much puzzled to restore, consistently with the metre, a Latin couplet which a stranger had made upon him, of which a word or two had been displaced. The Etonian pleased him exceedingly by at once performing the easy operation—

> "Ecce domus qualem Augusti non protulit ætas
> Hic sunt Mæcenas, Virgiliusque simul."

The author of 'Catiline' had confounded himself by beginning with *domus*. It must be added, however, that he wrote an excellent motto for a dissertation upon heat, which he preferred in the competition for an academy prize—

> "Ignis ubique latet, naturam amplectitur omnem
> Cuncta parit, renovat, dividit, unit, alit."

Crebillon, then director of the Parisian stage, was far less tolerant towards the 'Mahomet' than the Roman pontiff had been, and prohibited the representation of the play for ten years, when D'Alembert (in 1751), named by D'Argenson to examine it, reported in its favour with a courage wholly to be expected from him. The success of the piece was great, but, like 'Alzire,' it has not retained its place on the stage.

Many of his other pieces were damned from the first. This was the fate of 'Artemire,' the second which he produced; but he changed it in some particulars, and it had a great success under the name of 'Mariamne,' as indeed 'Zaire' itself had been the substitute for 'Eryphyle,' which failed. 'Adelaide,' in like manner, failed, and 'Gaston de Foix,' its substitute, had some success. The failure was owing to a jest passed on one of the passages much admired by critics. When Vendôme exclaims, "Es tu content, Couci?" a wag in

the pit cried—"Couci-couci," the French for so-so, or indifferent. A similar practical joke had for a while endangered the performance of 'Mariamne'—some one, on the Queen drinking, cried out "*La Reine boit.*" The panegyrists of Voltaire dwell on these and similar anecdotes to account for the loss of many of his pieces, but no play of real merit was ever thus destroyed. Many, also, praise the construction of some of them, and dwell especially upon the excellence of the plots. But the theatrical hell, as well as the other, is paved with good designs ill executed.

As for the comedies of Voltaire, they are wholly to be rejected: the utmost praise to which they can aspire is as *pièces de société.* They were indeed very little played at any time, except in private parties. The best is the 'Ecossaise,' which never was played at all. It is a bitter satire on Freron, under the name of Frelon (hornet), a profligate, mercenary, libeller, who, like some of his vile tribe in our own day, earned a miserable subsistence by selling the venom of his pen to the cowardly malice of some, and his forbearance to the less malignant but as despicable timidity of others.* The 'Enfant Prodigue' had considerable success, being played, it is said, nearly thirty times; but it was never known to be Voltaire's till he claimed it some years after. It is his most elaborate attempt in comedy, being a piece in five acts. Its verse, in five feet (or ten syllables), was an innovation, and apparently was not relished.

Thus, if the distance were less which separates Voltaire's tragedies from the rude and awful grandeur of the 'Cid,' and the exquisite pathos and perfect harmony of the 'Phèdre' and 'Athalie,' he would still be, on the comparison of general dramatic powers, left far behind Corneille, whose 'Menteur,' and Racine, whose

* This vile person had a yet viler son, the execrable conventionalist, who, during the Reign of Terror, almost equalled in the South, the atrocities of Currier and Lebon in the North of France.

'Plaideurs,' continue to keep their place in the line with the comedies of Molière himself, though the former is partially imitated from the Spanish, and the latter from the Attic stage.*

The 'Œdipe,' which was first performed in 1718, was followed in 1722 and 1724 by the 'Artemire' and 'Mariamne,' of which mention has been made, and the poem of the 'Ligue' was finished and published in the latter year, and afterwards given under the name of the 'Henriade.' To this work may be applied the same observation which the dramatic poetry of the author gives rise to,—it is beautifully written—it abounds in fine description, in brilliant passages of a noble diction, in sentiments admirable for their truth, their liberality, their humanity,—its tendency is to make fanaticism hateful, oppression despicable, injustice unbearable; but it is the grand work of a philosopher and a rhetorician, more than the inspiration of a poet. No one ever ventured upon a comparison of this epic with the 'Iliad' or the 'Odyssey;' the 'Æneid' has been reckoned to present more facilities of approach, but at how great a distance does it leave the 'Henriade!' Even Lucan, if less tender, is far more majestic; Tasso has, in every one essential quality, immeasurably surpassed Voltaire; with Milton he will not bear to be named, far less compared; and Dante, little epic as he is, has more touches of the poetic fire, more inimitable pictures drawn with a single stroke, more appeals to our feelings of horror, wonder, and even pity, in a single canto, than can be found in the whole ten of the 'Henriade.' There abounds in the poem fine writing, smooth versification, noble ideas, admirable sentiments—but poetry is wanting. The objection made by all, or nearly all critics, that the plot is so clumsily framed as to make the hero a subordinate person for nearly the first half, and to place over his head as his sovereign and master

* The 'Wasps' of Aristophanes, a satire on the Athenian special jurymen.

one of the most despicable and even disgusting voluptuaries that ever reigned in modern times, is perhaps not altogether well grounded, though it has some foundation. Although the first in rank, Valois (Henry III.) is a cipher, while his successor is the person actively employed in the conduct of affairs; and were the last a sort of mayor of the palace, the objection would lose its whole force: but Valois is not at all a *roi fainéant*; we are called upon to recognise his existence and his acts; we are even required to feel for him when he falls by the hands of an assassin; to accomplish his destruction the spirits Discord and Fanaticism are evoked from hell; the form of Guise, whom Valois had murdered, is assumed, and the King expires uttering a speech calculated to excite great interest in his fate.

This, however, must be reckoned as the least of the objections to which the poem is exposed; nor is the want of scenes surrounded with peril to try the hero's courage, nor even the feeble and unskilful manner in which the great event of the piece, Henry's conversion to obtain the crown, the most fatal defect. The piece is without dramatic interest; the characters are not sustained in action, still less in speech—indeed there is hardly any speaking in the poem. It is truly singular to find a writer, whose forte as a poet lay in dramatic composition, almost entirely abandon his stronghold when he comes to compose his epic. The action proceeds, but it proceeds by way of narrative. The characters are unfolded, but it is by the descriptions of the author, not by their own words. Indeed there are very few characters brought forward, and scarcely any but the hero himself bear their parts in the action. Want of fine metaphors, and penury of figurative expression, have been always imputed to it; and though there is no lack of similes, these are not very happy. But the cardinal defect is that the author appears perpetually before us; it is a history rather than a poem —a history in numerous verse, and beautifully com-

posed, but not more dramatic, and certainly less beautifully composed, than many passages of Livy, and some of Sallust. The objection made to the introduction of philosophy, as having no warrant from the ancients, is hypercritical, beside being incorrect; Virgil's cosmogony in the sixth Æneid afforded a precedent, if, in a modern poem, any were wanting. The same answer may be given to the cavil against his giving characters of persons introduced. Even Virgil has a few touches of this kind, and Lucan largely uses his moral pencil. But however admirable these passages of the 'Henriade,' and how easily soever we may be disposed to admit them as legitimate, they are exceptionable, as the only means on which the poet relies for bodying forth his conceptions. Again and again the remark occurs; we take the whole of the portraits and of the action from the artist, and not from the actors.

If the failures are signal in great passages, such as called for the full exertion of the poet's power—for example, the St. Bartholomew, and the famine; the death of Coligny in the former being altogether tame, with the exception of the lines which represent him as a king adored by his people, while his assassins, awe-struck by his presence, kneel before him;* the latter being described by words conveying general ideas of suffering or of disgust, not by things; and the picture of the infernal Catherine de Medicis receiving Coligny's head,†—if the failure be still more signal in the dénouement, Henry's conversion operated by an address of St. Louis to the Almighty, in which, forgetting Massillon's celebrated exordium to Louis XIV.'s funeral sermon, the Saint is actually made to call the hero "*Le Grand Henri*,"—nay, if the details of that con-

* "Et de ces assassins ce grand homme entouré,
Semblant un roi puissant par son peuple adoré."—(ii. 219.)

† "Medicis le reçut avec indifférence,
Sans paraître jouir du fruit de sa vengeance,
Sans remords, sans plaisir, maîtresse de ses sens,
Et comme accoutumée à de pareils encens."—(ii. 242.)

version are so described as to make it almost appear that Voltaire is laughing in his sleeve*, we must allow the very great beauty of other passages. The description of the Temple of Love, with which the ninth canto opens, is rich and splendid; the picture of St. Louis descending to stay the conqueror's hand in the sixth; the characters drawn so finely and forcibly in the seventh, especially those of Richelieu and Mazarin; the more concise traits by which he paints Guise in the third—

> "Connaissant ses périls, et ne redoutant rien,
> Heureux guerrier, grand prince, et mauvais citoyen;"

and Morney in the sixth—

> "Il marche en philosophe, où l'honneur le conduit,
> Condamne les combats, plaint son maître, et le suit;"—

these are all of the very highest excellence in their kind, though that kind is not epic, hardly poetical. So are such passages of profound sense as the strains of the immortal choir in the seventh canto,—strains "which each star repeated in its course,"—

> "A ta faible raison garde-toi de te rendre,
> Dieu t'a fait pour l'aimer, et non pour le comprendre;
> Invisible à tes yeux, qu'il règne dans ton cœur,
> Il confonde l'injustice, il pardonne à l'erreur;
> Mais il punit aussi toute erreur volontaire,
> Mortel ouvre les yeux quand son soleil t'éclaire!"

But the finest of all these extraordinary passages are such as in the same Canto, by far the finest of the poem, paint not merely by abstract ideas and by verbose descriptions, but by strokes of genuine poetry, the fiend of Envy:—

* See particularly x. 480, et seq.—This passage contains the line on transubstantiation which Marmontel admires so much as to pronounce that curse of Fenelon against those who are not moved by the famous couplet in the first Eclogue, "Fortunate senex," &c., "Malheur à qui n'est pas ému en le lisant." I fear many a reader lies under this anathema. The verse is—

> "Et lui découvre un Dieu dans un pain qui n'est plus."
> "And in a loaf that is no more reveals a God."

"Là git la sombre Envie, à l'œil timide et louche,
Versant sur des lauriers les poisons de sa bouche;
Le jour blesse ses yeux, dans l'ombre étincelans,
Triste amante des morts, elle hait les vivans."

"Pale Envy see, with faltering step advance,
With look suspicious, indirect, askance,
With eyes that quiver and abhor the light,
But flash with fire and sparkle in the night:
She pours her venom o'er each laureled head,
Hates all that live, sad lover of the dead."

Of Pride:—

"Auprès d'elle est l'Orgueil, qui se plait et s'admire."

Of Weakness:—

"La Faiblesse au teint pale, aux regards abattus:
Tyran qui cède au crime et détruit les vertus."

"Weakness, with paly hue and downcast eyes,
Under whose iron rule vice thrives and virtue dies."

Of Ambition:—

"Sanglante, inquiète, égarée,
De trônes, de tombeaux, d'esclaves entourée."

"Restless, bloodstain'd, all perils wildly braves,
Stalks among thrones, and sepulchres, and slaves."

Of Hypocrisy:—

"La tendre Hypocrisie aux yeux pleins de douceur:
Le ciel est dans ses yeux, l'enfer est dans son cœur."

"The tender creature's eyes with sweetness swell:
Heaven's in those eyes, and in her heart is hell."

Nor is the song of these furies, on seeing Henry approach their impious troop, without the highest merit:—

"Quel mortel, disent-ils, par sa juste conduite,
Vient nous persécuter dans l'éternelle nuit?"

These are passages of true poetry; they even approach the seventh Canto to the sixth book of the 'Æneid.' It may be questioned if the ideas of making Envy "triste amante des morts"—Feebleness "tyran qui

cède aux crimes et détruit les vertus"—and Hypocrisy "tendre," are equalled by any of Virgil's moral pictures. Certainly to all in the eleventh book of the 'Odyssey' it is beyond doubt immeasurably superior, as indeed is the sixth Æneid. Nor can we hesitate to affirm that, had the rest of the 'Henriade' been composed in the same poetic spirit, we should not have been suffered with impunity to consider it an eloquent history.

In the year 1730 Voltaire wrote part of another poem, which he finished at intervals during the seven or eight years following—his too famous mock-heroic, the 'Pucelle d'Orléans.' It is painful and humiliating to human genius to confess, what yet is without any doubt true, that this is, of all his poetical works, the most perfect, showing most wit, most spirit, most of the resources of a great poet, though of course the nature of the subject forbids all attempts at either the pathetic or the sublime; but in brilliant imagery—in picturesque description—in point and epigram—in boundless fertility of fancy—in variety of striking and vigorous satire—all clothed in verse as natural as Swift's, and far more varied as well as harmonious—no prejudice, however naturally raised by the moral faults of the work, can prevent us from regarding it as the great masterpiece of his poetical genius. Here of course the panegyric must close, and it must give way to indignation at such a perversion of such divine talents. The indecency, often amounting to absolute obscenity, which pervades nearly the whole composition, cannot be excused on the plea that it is only a witty licentiousness, instead of one which excites the passions; still less can it be palliated by citing bad precedents, least of all by referring to such writers as Ariosto, who more rarely violates the laws of decorum;*

* In some of the author's correspondence he is fond of referring to indelicate passages of other writers in his justification; nay, even to the plain language used in some parts of the Old Testament. This flimsy

whereas Voltaire is ready to commit this offence at every moment, and seems ever to take the view of each subject that most easily lends itself to licentious allusions. But this is not all. The 'Pucelle' is one continued sneer at all that men do hold, and all that they ought to hold, sacred, from the highest to the least important subjects, in a moral view—from the greatest to the most indifferent, even in a critical view. Religion and its ministers and its professors—virtue, especially the virtues of a prudential cast—the feelings of humanity—the sense of beauty—the rules of poetical composition—the very walks of literature in which Voltaire had most striven to excel—are all made the constant subjects of sneering contempt, or of ribald laughter; sometimes by wit, sometimes by humour, not rarely by the broad grins of mere gross buffoonery. It is a sad thing to reflect that the three masterpieces of three such men as Voltaire, Rousseau, Byron, should all be the most immoral of their compositions. It seems as if their prurient nature had been affected by a bad but criminal excitement to make them exceed themselves.—Assuredly if such was not Voltaire's case, he well merits the blame; for he scrupled not to read his 'Pucelle' to his niece, then a young woman.*

reason is at once put to flight by Sir Joshua Reynolds's and Mr. Hume's illustration of the nakedness of the Indian and the prostitute. But it is worth while to observe how carefully the first and greatest of poets avoids all cause of blame in the passages where he is brought towards the verge of indecency. The Song of the Bard, in the 8th Odyssey, where Vulcan's discovery of Mars and Venus is related, is the most remarkable of these; and the jocose talk of Apollo and Mars on the subject savours somewhat of ribaldry. But see the short and simple expressions used, and mark that nothing is liquorishly dwelt on:—

Ὡς τὰ πρῶτα μιγησαν ἐν Ἡφαιστοιο δομοισιν.—(viii. 269.)

And—

Αὐταρ ἐγων ἐυδοιμι παρα χρυσιη Ἀφροδιτῃ.—(viii. 342.)

So when describing in the 11th Odyssey Neptune's rape of Pyro, the old bard only says—

Αὐτὰρ δὲ παρθενιην ζωνην, κατὰ δ' ὕπνον ἐχευεν.—(xi. 244.)

* Correspondance Générale, iii. 454.

But here it would be unjust to forget that the same genius which underwent this unworthy prostitution, was also enlisted by its versatile possessor in the service of virtue and of moral truth. There may be some doubt if his moral essays, the 'Discours sur l'Homme,' may not be placed at the head of his serious poetry—none whatever that it is a performance of the highest merit. As the subject is didactic, his talents, turned towards grave reasoning and moral painting, adapted rather to satisfy the understanding than to touch the heart, and addressing themselves more to the learned and polite than to the bulk of mankind, occupied here their appointed province, and had their full scope. Pope's moral essays gave the first hint of these beautiful compositions; but there is nothing borrowed in them from that great moral poet, and there is no inferiority in the execution of the plan. A strict regard to modesty, with the exception of a line or two, reigns throughout, and the object is to inculcate the purest principles of humanity, of tolerance, and of virtue. None but a Romanist bigot could ever have discovered the lurking attack upon religion in the noble verses against substituting vain ceremonies for good works, and attempting to honour the Deity by ascetic abstinence from the enjoyments which he has kindly provided for our happiness. Nay, the finest panegyric on the ministry of Christ is to be found mingled with the same just reprehensions of those who pervert and degrade his doctrines (Disc. vii.), and even the optimism of which in his other works he has ridiculed the extravagant doctrines, is here preached with a pious approval of its moderate and rational faith, (Disc. iii. v.) His ridicule of saints is confined to the fanatical devotees or hypocritical pretenders who degrade and desecrate the name. If he mentions any miracles with disrespect, it is their false ones, as in that fine passage, which yet gave offence, in the seventh Discourse—

"Les miracles sont bons; mais soulager son frére,
Mais tirer son ami du sein de la misère,
Mais à ses ennemis pardonner leurs vertus,
C'est un plus grand miracle, et qui ne se fait plus."

To judge of the admirable tendency of this noble poem, we need only cite such lines as give the subject of the first discourse—omitted strangely with some of the very finest of the whole, as those on Timante, Cyrus, and De Thou, in the seventh:

"Mortel, en quelque état que le ciel t'ait fait naître,
Sois soumis, sois content, et rend grace à ton maître:"

and those on tolerance in the second—

"Ferme en tes sentimens et simple dans ton cœur,
Aime la vérité, mais pardonne à l'erreur;
Fuis les importuner d'un zèle atrabilaire.
Ce mortel qui s'égare est un homme, et ton frère;
Sois sage pour toi seul, compatissant pour lui,
Fais ton bonheur enfin par le bonheur d'autrui."

The panegyric on friendship in the fourth is perhaps unequalled on that trite subject. That point and satire should be found in this poem was to be expected, but they are by no means overdone; nay, they are kept in subjection to the great and good design of the work; and if we have a dark picture strongly but admirably drawn, it is that of the despicable Des Fontaines:—

"Ce vil fripier d'écrits que l'intérêt dévore,
Qui vend au plus offrant son encre et ses fureurs,
Méprisable en son goût, détestable en ses mœurs.
Médisant, qui se plaint des brocards qu'il essuye,
Satirique, ennuyeux, disant que tout l'ennuye,
Criant que le bon goût s'est perdu dans Paris,
Et le prouvant très—bien, du moins, par ses écrits."
(Disc. iii.)

"Huckster of printed wares, who barters still
The oil or venom of his hireling quill;
Whose taste and morals are alike impure,
And none his writings, none his life endure;
A general slanderer, touch him and he roars,
Dully, the dulness of the age deplores,
Cries that at Paris taste in books there's none,
And proves it if he can but sell his own."

We have also such wholesome morality as the couplet against asceticism in the tenth:

"Malgré la sainteté de son auguste emploi,
C'est n'être bon à rien de n'être bon qu'à toi."

And the noble one in the third against envy—

"La gloire d'un rival s'obstine à t'outrager,
C'est en le surpassant que tu dois t'en venger!"

But some passages have high merit of a more purely poetical cast. There is nothing finer, if anything so fine, in Pope, as the close of the fifth, where he compares his own prosecution of his literary labours, while arrested at Francfort, to Pan's continuing to play while Cacus seized his flocks; and then breaks out in a strain not surpassed by Virgil—

"Heureux qui jusqu'au temps du terme de sa vie,
Des beaux arts amoureux, peut cultiver les fruits!
Il brave l'injustice, il calme les ennuis,
Il pardonne aux humains, il rit de leur délire,
Et de sa main mourant il touche encore la lyre."

"Ah, happy he who to life's latest hour
Of the arts enamour'd, plucks their fruit and flower;
He braves injustice, snail-paced time beguiles,
Forgives his foes, at human folly smiles.
Life's glimmering lamp feeds with poetic fire,
And with his dying fingers sweeps the lyre."

There is, perhaps, one yet greater passage, the conclusion of the third canto:

"Qu'il est grand, qu'il est doux, de se dire à soi-même,
Je n'ai point d'ennemis, j'ai des rivaux que j'aime,
Je prends part à leur gloire, à leur maux, à leur biens,
Les arts nous ont unis, leurs beaux jours sont les miens:
C'est ainsi que la terre avec plaisir rassemble,
Ces chênes, ces sapins, qui s'élèvent ensemble,
Un suc tojours égal est préparé pour eux;
Leur pieds touchent aux enfers, leur cime est dans les cieux;
Leur trônc inébranlable, et leur pompeuse tête,
Résiste, en se touchant, aux coups de la tempête;
Ils vivent l'un par l'autre, ils triomphent du temps,
Tandis que sous leur ombre on voit de vils serpens,
Se livrer, en sifflant, des guerres intestines,
Et de leur sang impur arroser leurs racines."

The following translation is most imperfect, and has only the merit of being very literal :—

"How grand, how sweet, the heavenly strains ascend,
Foes I have none, my rival is my friend;
The arts unite us, common are our cares,
And each the other's griefs and glories shares:
So Earth, our common parent, loves to rear
Yon oak, yon pine, and make them flourish near;
On one green spot the sylvan giants stand,
Cast one broad shadow o'er the grateful land;
Feel the same juice through all their veins arise;
Deep pierce their roots entwined, their tops approach the skies.
Their trunks unshaken, of majestic form,
Embracing each the other, mock the storm;
O'er time they triumph, strong in mutual aid,
While envious snakes, obscure, frequent their shade,
And hiss, and sting, and with each other's blood
Impure, profane the monarchs of the wood."

The 'Loi Naturelle,' though not without considerable beauties, and altogether free from exceptionable passages, is every way inferior to this fine poem. The 'Désastre de Lisbonne' is of the same merit; and though the object is to cry down those who deny the existence of evil, it conducts the argument with perfect decency—nay, the turn given to it at the close is of a purely religious character.

"Le passé n'est pour nous qu'un triste souvenir,
Le présent est affreux s'il n'est point d'avenir;
Si la nuit du tombeau détruit l'être qui pense,
Un jour tout sera bien—'voilà notre espérance!'
Tout est bien aujourd'hui—voilà l'illusion!"

"Sad the remembrance of the moments past,
And sad the present, if they be the last!
O'er all our landscape evil sheds a gloom,
If all our prospect 's bounded by the tomb;
When we say, 'all is well,' from truth we stray,
Our comfort is, 'all will be well one day.'"

It is melancholy to reflect on the use which was sometimes made of such a rich genius, and to think of the benefits which might have been showered down upon mankind by the wise and temperate employment of those treasures. Great as were the services unde-

niably rendered in spite of the evil mixture, they sink into nothing compared with what might have been hoped from their pure and diligent devotion to the best interests of mankind.

There needs no comment upon the numerous class of the lighter and shorter productions, the *verse de société*, the epigrams, the *jeux d'esprit*, in which he was by common consent admitted to have excelled all his contemporaries—probably all the wits that ever lived and wrote. Their great inequality is no doubt as certain, and it was an inevitable consequence of such a facility as he possessed, and such an active spirit as moved him. Their peculiar adaptation to the circumstances that gave them birth is also a necessary concomitant of this kind of composition. But it is singular that the most elaborate of this whole class of his writings, and the one which he probably most valued, the 'Guerres civiles de Genève,' is without exception the worst of all his productions, and can hardly be matched for dulness and flatness by any undoubted production in verse of any other eminent poet.

It seemed convenient to discuss the question, or rather the kind and the degree of what is unquestionable—Voltaire's poetical excellence—on the occasion of his first success, the 'Œdipe,' in order to take the whole subject at once, and not to break the continuity of our narrative each time that a new drama or a new poem was produced by his fertile genius. We must now return to the history of his life.

The success of 'Œdipe' placed him, though young, on the lists of fame, and of dramatic fame, the most quick of all others, especially at Paris, in its returns both of profit and social enjoyment. He became the friend, even the confidant, of the Duc de Richelieu, and shared in his disgrace under the Regent, being obliged for a while to quit Paris. But on the re-

presentation of the 'Mariamne,' he was permitted to return, and he soon after accompanied Madame de Rupelmonde to the Low Countries. To her he addressed in that year, 1722, the 'Epitre à Uranie,' a sceptical rather than a plainly deistical ode, which possessed some poetical merit, but was forgotten among his subsequent successes. At Brussels he made the acquaintance of J. B. Rousseau, and laid the foundation of the unrelenting animosity with which that middling writer and irritable personage pursued him ever after. This he owed to a jest; having told him, on reading his 'Ode to Posterity,' "that it would never reach its destination." Rousseau, himself the author of many licentious epigrams, against the clergy, hypocritically affected to take offence at the 'Epitre à Uranie,' and at Voltaire's irreverent demeanour during mass. Had he but spared the truth which he spoke in jest on the bad ode, he might have scoffed with Lucian and blasphemed with Borgia.

He now endeavoured in vain to regain the enjoyment he most loved—the society of Paris. An unfortunate quarrel with the Chevalier de Rohan exposed him to the resentment of the Court, and the risk of again inhabiting the Bastille. Some epigram or jest at the Chevalier's expense had been reported to him, and he basely set his servants on the wit, whom they severely beat. A challenge was the consequence; but as the poet's rank did not authorize this liberty, he was on the point of being handed over to the police, or secured by a *lettre de cachet*, and he resolved to fly. His plan was to visit England, attracted by her liberty, and above all, by that which he seems ever to have valued most—the spirit of tolerance and the security against ecclesiastical oppression. He lived above two years in London and its neighbourhood, chiefly at Wandsworth, in the house of a friend, Mr. Falconer, then a respectable Turkey merchant, afterwards Ambassador to the Porte and Secretary to the Duke of

Cumberland. During this residence he corrected the 'Henriade.' Under that name the 'Ligue' was now published by a subscription, which Queen Caroline, then Princess of Wales, warmly patronized, and which produced a large sum of money. He likewise devoted himself with his wonted zeal and success to the study of the Newtonian philosophy. He lived in the society of our literary men; though the great age of Sir Isaac Newton prevented him from forming any acquaintance with him whose system he was destined first to make known in Europe. With Pope and with Congreve he had many interviews: for the former he acquired a respect and esteem which the similarity of their poetical genius naturally cemented, and which no envy or jealousy ever interrupted; of the latter, he is said to have formed a less favourable judgment. The silly affectation of telling him, when he came to admire the Molière of England, that he valued himself, not on his authorship, but would be regarded as a man of the world, received a just rebuke: "I should never have come so far to see a gentleman," said Voltaire.

This journey to England had two important consequences. The money which he obtained, and which he afterwards increased by a lucky chance in the lottery, and by engaging in one or two successful mercantile speculations, yielded him an ample income for the rest of his life; so that he cared little for the profits of his works, and indeed gave many of them for nothing to the booksellers and the actors. Not only was he thus secured in the state of independence which is an author's best protection against crude and hasty composition, but he was able to follow the bent of his taste in choosing his subjects, and of his disposition both to encourage young authors of merit, and to relieve the distresses of deserving persons. Proofs also remain which place beyond all doubt his kindness to several worthless men, who repaid it with the black ingratitude so commonly used as their current coin by

the base and spiteful, who thus repay their benefactors and salve their own wounded pride by pouring venom on the hand that saved or served them.

But his residence in England had a still more important result—the importation he made from thence of the Newtonian system, or rather, of all Sir Isaac Newton's wonderful discoveries. So deeply rooted were the prejudices of our Continental neighbours in favour of the Cartesian philosophy, that when Fontenelle pronounced his éloge of Newton, at the Académie des Sciences, he gave the preference to Des Cartes; and even ten years later, the Chancellor D'Aguesseau refused the licence to print Voltaire's work because it denied and disproved the *Vortices*—an act of narrow-minded bigotry in science scarcely to be matched in all its annals. Voltaire, soon after his return from England, published his 'Lettres sur les Anglais'—a candid and intelligent work; and in three of these he gives a very correct though extremely general and popular sketch of Newton's discoveries. But in 1738 appeared his more full and satisfactory account of them, and it certainly does the greatest honour to its author. This work owes its origin, however, not more to his English residence than to the intimacy which he formed soon after his return to France, about the year 1730, with the family of Du Chatelet; and before considering the merits of the book, it may be convenient to dwell for a little while upon the history of that celebrated attachment.

The Marquess Du Chatelet had married several years before a lady of high rank, Gabrielle Emilie de Breteuil, much younger than himself; and, according to the manners of those times and that country, she herself had not been consulted upon the match when her parents gave her away. When Voltaire became acquainted with her she was in her twenty-fourth year, and one of the most remarkable persons, both for beauty, talents, and accomplishments, that adorned

the French Court, or the refined society of Paris. At first her acquaintance with the poet was of an ordinary kind, probably formed by the reputation of the wit and the rank of the lady. But the literary taste of the Marchioness found so much improvement and such constant gratification in the great resources of his various knowledge, his versatile talents, and his inexhaustible wit, that it can be no wonder if his society soon became necessary to a woman of her decided inclination for literary and scientific pursuits. The fame which he had acquired as a dramatist, and in the brilliant circles of Paris society, would have riveted the attention of an ordinary woman, to whom he showed a desire of devoting himself. But though she was herself fond of all the common amusements of her rank and sex, lived in the circles of the court as might be expected of a Breteuil, and cultivated all the graces, even as displayed in the lighter accomplishments, it seems doubtful if she would have formed so decided a predilection for the company of any one who had not begun to cultivate those severer sciences to which she gave a marked preference. Nor can we much question the probability of Voltaire having, after his return from England, turned his attention far more to these studies than he otherwise would have done, in order to make a progress not only in philosophy, but also in the good graces of a person so distinguished in every way—young, handsome, noble, attractive, as well as learned beyond the ordinary measure even of man's information, endowed with talents both solid and ornamental, and inspired by a taste for the graver as well as the lighter pursuits of genius. The difficulties in which he was involved by a lettre de cachet threatened, if not issued, on account of the 'Letters' after his return from England, had obliged him to leave Paris. There seems every reason to believe that the arrangement by which he became an inmate in the Marquess's house was formed about the same

time, and that he found a refuge at the château of Cirey in Champagne, whither the literary tastes of the Marchioness had made her resolve to withdraw from the frivolity of the court and the dissipation of the capital, and had enabled her to prevail with the Marquess, who yielded to this new plan of life. They had at this time a son and a daughter; and an Abbé named Linant was engaged as the tutor of the former, while the Marchioness herself superintended the latter's education.

The château of Cirey, on the confines of Champagne and Lorraine, had, like most French country houses, fallen into some disrepair. Steps were immediately taken to put it in order, and a considerable addition of a gallery and a laboratory, or cabinet of natural philosophy, was made to it under Voltaire's superintendence. The elegance and even luxury of the apartments is described as very great. He likewise furnished the funds required for the improvements, by lending the Marquess 40,000 francs, and by providing a portion of the furniture, of the apparatus, and of the library, which became a sufficiently large one for all ordinary purposes. It appears, that soon after the building was finished, he reduced his claim to 30,000 francs, and agreed to take in lieu of that sum an annuity of 2000 francs. Fifteen years, however, elapsed without any payment of the annuity; and though the arrears now amounted to 30,000 francs, he agreed to receive 15,000 both for those arrears and for the remainder of his life-interest in the annuity: of this 15,000 francs it does not appear that he ever received more than 10,000—so that he gave up altogether a sum of about £2000 sterling, principal and interest.* But he appears constantly to have assisted the household with money, which the careless habits of the Marquess, and the yet less worldly nature of the Marchioness, occa-

* A sum equal at the present time, and in England, to at least £6000.

sionally rendered necessary. The income of the Marquess was about 40,000 francs, equal to about £6000 in this country at the present time.

The family appears to have lived together in great harmony, though occasionally somewhat broken by the rather impetuous temper of the fair analyst. They led a retired, contemplative, and studious, but by no means a dull or unvaried life. Visits were occasionally made to Paris; in Brussels and the Hague it became necessary to pass some time, partly on account of Voltaire's work then printing there, the 'Elements,' partly on account of a law-suit by which the family had been exhausted for sixty years, and of which Voltaire's active interposition obtained the amicable settlement, by payment to the Marquess of 220,000 francs.

Some of the greatest mathematicians of the age frequented the château, and assisted the Marchioness in her studies. Kœnig and his brother, disciples of the Bernouillis, passed two years there; but also D. Bernouilli himself was occasionally a visitor; and so was the illustrious Clairault. Maupertuis, a man of very inferior mark, but esteemed at that time, when his journey to measure a degree in Lapland caused him to be overrated, was more than once the Marquess's guest and his wife's instructor or fellow-student. The Marchioness seldom dined with the family, whose dinner-hour was twelve: but they more frequently assembled all together to supper at eight in the evening. Though the Marchioness was chiefly engaged in her 'Commentaries on Newton,' and her able and learned translation of the 'Principia,' she could distract her mind from such studies by the pleasures of music and of the stage; and we find Voltaire telling friends whom he is inviting to visit them, that "plays are made daily, and Jupiter's satellites observed nightly (Cor. Générale, iii. 184); that they will be free to pass the mornings in their own apartments, and will hear read

in the evening the compositions of the day; and that the Marchioness 'joue ou l'opéra, ou la comédie, ou la comète'" (*ib.* 312). Indeed Voltaire himself exhibited perhaps the most remarkable instance of varied and versatile talents on record, by producing, within the same three or four years, the Newtonian 'Elements,' his prize essay on 'Fire,' 'Zaire,' 'Alzire,' 'Mahomet,' 'the Discours sur l'Homme,' more than half of the 'Pucelle,' the 'History of Charles XII.,' beside an endless variety of minor pieces, and some volumes of correspondence in prose and verse. The 'Pucelle' was begun to amuse him while obliged to fly from Paris in 1734 by the persecutions he suffered on account of the 'Letters on England.'

It was at Cirey, then, with a few weeks passed in 'Sgravesande's society at Leyden, that Voltaire composed, and finally prepared for publication his 'Elements of the Newtonian Philosophy,' as well as his 'Essay on Fire;' and of both these works we may now treat.

In order to estimate the merits of the work on Sir Isaac Newton's discoveries, we must first consider the state in which it found the Newtonian system on the Continent; next, the helps which he had in writing it.

There can be no doubt that Clairault, destined afterwards to confirm the theory of the moon's motions, though at first, with others, to undergo a temporary error upon the subject,—destined also to join with D'Alembert and Euler in explaining the disturbing forces by working out the problem of the three bodies,—destined, finally, to bring the disturbances in the trajectories of comets within the theory of planetary attraction,—very early, probably before Voltaire, adopted the Newtonian philosophy; for, though only fifteen years old when Voltaire's 'Letters' were written, he had, when only thirteen, begun his admirable work on Curves of Double Curvature, and it was published very soon after the 'Letters' appeared. But it is cer-

tain that he had given nothing to the world on the theory of gravitation. Maupertuis had probably, in scientific circles, professed his conversion, and intimated that he renounced the Cartesian philosophy; but until after his return from Lapland, in 1738, he never made any public profession of his faith, his 'Commentary,' in 1732, being confined to the dynamical subject of the 12th Section of the 'Principia.' (Book I.) Voltaire's 'Letters,' therefore, published in 1732, first defended generally, and his 'Elements,' in 1738, defined in detail the new system, and gave an explanation of it so clear and popular, as in all likelihood neither Maupertuis nor Clairault could have furnished. He therefore justly claims the glory of first making the Newtonian system accessible to the bulk of European readers, of fully refuting the Cartesian errors, and of boldly opposing a doctrine which, of all philosophical tenets since Aristotle's philosophy, had taken the strongest hold of men's minds. Indeed, the prejudices in favour of the Vortices, like those in favour of the Aristotelian philosophy, appear to have partaken of the zeal, and even of the intolerant spirit, which theological dogmas are too often found to excite. Fontenelle, in his 'Eloge' of Newton, had shown his adhesion to Des Cartes. The Chancellor D'Aguesseau, as I have already remarked, could never be prevailed upon to grant a licence for printing Voltaire's work; he kept the manuscript in his possession for eight months, and ended by refusing his permission —a piece of folly and bigotry worthy of that eminent and virtuous, but feeble character, which had made him also refuse the licence to print a novel, unless the hero was made to change his religion and become a Catholic. Even the 'Letters on England' had suffered persecution, partly from their opposing Des Cartes, but chiefly because with Locke, they denied innate ideas, which the bigotted clergy deemed an approach to materialism, or at any rate, a doctrine tending to

level the human mind with that of the lower animals—a doctrine, however, it must be observed, for that very reason somewhat favourable to themselves. The result of their efforts was a lettre de cachet, and Voltaire's sudden flight from Paris. Another consequence, and one very discreditable to him, was his positive and public denial of the authorship, and affirming that the letters had been written by his early patron, the Abbé Chaulieu, now no more. These letters were first published in London by his friend M. Theiriot, who caused them to be translated into English, in which language they first appeared. He was allowed to reap the whole profits of the work. Afterwards Voltaire gave a bookseller at Rouen leave to publish the original French; but withdrew his consent as soon as he perceived the trouble into which the work would bring him. His countermand, however, arrived too late, and he suffered great annoyance in consequence. It is usually represented that this book, containing his more general sketch of the Newtonian system, was written as early as 1727 or 1728; but this is certainly incorrect. The letters were in great part written while he was living at the house of Mr. Falconer at Wandsworth; but those on Sir Isaac Newton's discoveries were so far from being then finished, that they were probably not commenced; for we find in the 'Correspondance' letters as late as the autumn of 1732, in which he consulted Maupertuis upon the doctrine of attraction, and was wavering between that and the vortices. There are no less than five letters written by him on this subject; and after his objections to the Newtonian doctrine had been removed by Maupertuis, he falls back and sends him a long paper on the moon's motion, dated 5th November, 1732.* The 'Letters,' however, at length appeared, and his own account of that portion of them is at once accurate

* Cor. Gén., i. 244 et seq., and 259; ii. 493, 514.

and witty. "I carefully avoid entering into calculations," he says: "I am like a person who settles with his steward, but does not go to work arithmetically." The 'Elements' were written between 1732 and 1736, were finished about that time, and were published in 1738.

The other matter for consideration is the assistance which Voltaire privately had in preparing this work. It is clear that he must have begun his physical studies with a very indifferent provision of mathematical knowledge. It is equally clear that he studied natural philosophy with Madame du Chatelet, who had a particular taste for the mathematics. She had received instruction from Maupertuis; some also from Clairault before he went to Lapland; but she received still more from him after he returned to Cirey. He had fully instructed her in the Newtonian philosophy, and in the method of conducting the demonstrations of the 'Principia' analytically—a most invaluable service to any student at that time, when the excellent commentary of the Jesuits* (Le Sueur and Jacquier) had not appeared: she reduced his lessons to writing, and they were afterwards published among her posthumous works.† Her 'Institutes de Physique' were published in 1740, and contain a very accurate account of the Newtonian system; and as it is clear, from Voltaire's Correspondence, that the work was written before the beginning of that year, it can admit of no doubt that she was acquainted with the Newtonian philosophy at the time he was writing his 'Elements;' the printing of which began early in 1737, and continued nearly two years. He therefore derived all the benefit that his knowledge of the subject enabled him to receive from

* They were Minimes, and not Jesuits as they are always called.

† Voltaire (Mémoires, Œuv., i. 219) erroneously ascribes this work to Madame du Chatelet herself, and says it was revised by Clairault. The 'Mémoires' abound in error. Thus they make the journey to Luneville in 1749, instead of 1748.

Clairault; and Kœnig lived at Cirey the whole of the years 1738 and 1739, so as to make it very possible that he revised the book while it passed through the press. He admits Madame du Chatelet's share in the work, in express terms, to Frederick II.* The access to these helps, however, does not materially lessen his merits. Indeed he had the benefit of Pemberton's 'General View,' which was published as early as 1728, and is more than once referred to by him. Maclaurin's was not published till 1748.

That Voltaire had, or in consequence of sympathy with Madame du Chatelet acquired, some taste for the mathematics is certain. He even prosecuted the study with considerable assiduity. After making some progress he consulted Clairault, and asked him if he could conscientiously advise him to persevere in the pursuit —to go on with the cultivation of a science which is commonly supposed to require an undivided homage from its votaries, though D'Alembert's example negatives the assumption. We are not informed of the grounds upon which Clairault candidly gave his opinion that the science of number and quantity was not Voltaire's vocation; whether he found him ill grounded in a branch of knowledge which he had studied late, or saw in any attempts at original investigation that his genius lay not that way. It is, however, to be lamented that his advice was either given so generally, or so generally construed and followed, as to make no exception in favour of experimental philosophy, in which I am strongly inclined to think, and shall presently explain why, his acuteness, his industry, his sagacity, above all his brave contempt of received opinions, and his deep-rooted habit of judging every proposition by its own merits, would in all probability have ranked him among the discoverers of the age.

The 'Elémens' is a work of a much higher order

* Cor. avec les Souverains, i. 60.

than the 'Letters,' and does great credit both to his industry and his accuracy. It is indeed so free from errors, although it is by no means a superficial account of the Newtonian philosophy, that, with the limited knowledge of mathematics which Voltaire possessed, we can hardly conceive his having avoided mistakes, and must therefore suppose that either 'Sgravesande, with whom he passed some time at Leyden, while the work was in the press, or Kœnig, who was then living at Cirey, must have gone over and revised it. There is no greater mistake than theirs who call the 'Elements' a flimsy or superficial work. The design of it is not to enter minutely into the profound investigations of the 'Principia,' or to follow all the exquisite inductive processes of the 'Optics,' but to give the great truths unfolded in both these immortal works, with a certain portion of the evidence on which they rest, so that the reader unacquainted with the mathematics beyond the mere definitions, and perhaps one or two of the elementary propositions in geometry, may be able to form an accurate notion of the reasoning that supports the mighty system. The design is this: that design is executed; and the power of explaining an abstract subject in easy and accurate language, language not in any way beneath the dignity of science, though quite suited to the comprehension of uninformed persons, is unquestionably shown in a manner which only makes it a matter of regret that the singularly gifted author did not carry his torch into all the recesses of natural philosophy. It must be added, that, beside explaining the discoveries of Newton, he has given an equally clear view of the science as it stood before those great changes were effected. The Cartesian system is fully explained, and the outline of optical science, independent of Newton's researches, is more extended and more elaborate than the account of those researches. The second part relates to the nature and action of light; the third to the system of the world; and the

first part enters at some length into the general doctrines of mind, matter, force, and motion, even dealing with the doctrines of natural religion.

Whoever reads the work attentively, allowing it the full praise so justly its due, will find it wholly incapable of furnishing any proof that the author had ever read either the 'Principia' or the 'Optics.' There is no reference to those writings which at all shows that he had ever seen a line of them. In the controversy with the Cartesians, which he carried on after the 'Elements' were published, he cites the 96th proposition (meaning of the first book of the 'Principia,' although he does not mention the book); but it is only to speak of optical matters. He also refers to the *Scholium Generale;* but that has been constantly cited, and for the most part at second hand, by those who never read any other part of the work. It is further to be observed, that no account whatever is given, nor even any mention made, of the Second Book, concerning motion in resisting media.—Indeed there are indications more positive of his not having drunk at the pure source itself. If he had been acquainted with the 'Optics,' in describing the induction by which the composition of white light is proved, he never surely would have omitted the *experimentum crucis.* He gives (Part ii. chap. 10) the composition of the spectral rays by means of a lens, and their forming white in the focus; but he leaves entirely out the decisive experiment of stopping different portions of the spectrum, and then finding that the focus is no longer white, but of the colour, or mixture of colours, suffered to pass onward. It is perhaps a proof of the same kind, that he states what he certainly never could have learnt in the 'Optics,' the blue colour of the sky as caused by the great attenuation of the vapours arising in the atmosphere (Part ii. chap. 12). Nor could any one who had studied the same admirable work have confined himself almost entirely to one portion of it, and give scarcely any

account, except the most general, and indeed meagre, of the colours of thin plates, and none at all of the colours of thick plates.

With respect to the 'Principia,' he gives with considerable fulness the doctrine of equal areas in equal times; and indeed, from his account, the demonstration as well as the fundamental proposition itself may be gathered. But then comes this very summary statement of the planetary law:—"Enfin Newton a prouvé que si la courbe décrite autour du centre est une ellipse, la force attractive est en raison inverse du carré des distances" (Part iii. chap. 4). He indeed leaves us here to infer, quite contrary to the truth, that the same proportion is peculiar to motion in an ellipse; and he makes no mention whatever of the inverse problem, the deducing the curve from the force—the more important of the two.

There is a profound view given of the irregularity in the moon's motion caused by disturbance (Part iii. chap. 6), and one or two other parts of the treatise deserve the same praise. A possibility exists of these having been written by another hand. It seems difficult to suppose the same very accurate writer could be the author of such passages as we meet with in the defences of the work against the Cartesians. Thus, in the 'Courte Réponse aux longs Discours d'un Docteur Allemand,' we find him saying he had expected repose, but now discovered that "la racine carré du cube des révolutions des planètes et les carrés de leurs distances fesaient encore des ennemis;" in which allusion there are three capital blunders; the square root of the cube is taken for the cube, the revolutions for the distances, and the squares for the cubes.

In 1737 both Voltaire and Madame du Chatelet were competitors for the prize of the Academy of Science. The subject was, "The nature of fire and its propagation." Neither paper was successful, but both were honourably mentioned by the committee of

examination, and both were printed as a mark of approval. When it is added that the illustrious Euler gained the prize, surely we may well be permitted to say that no discredit could result from being surpassed by such a rival. But Voltaire's paper is of great merit. He takes bold and original views, and describes experiments which, had he pursued them with more patience, would probably have enrolled his name among the greatest discoverers of his age. It is impossible to have made a more happy conjecture than he does upon the weight acquired by metals when calcined. After describing an experiment made by him with melted iron, "Il est très possible," says he, "que cette augmentation de poid soit venue de la matière repandue dans l'atmosphère; donc dans toutes les autres opérations par lesquelles les matières calcinées acquirent du poids, cette augmentation de substance pourrait aussi leur être venue de la même cause, et non de la matière ignée." About half a century later this conjecture was verified, when the composition of the atmosphere was discovered. Had Voltaire followed up his felicitous conjecture by one or two experiments, he would very probably have discovered both the nature of oxygen and the process of oxydation, which last, indeed, he had in general terms described.

Again, how near does he approach to the true theory of fluidity, and even to the discovery of latent heat, when, speaking of the effects on the thermometer of mixing ammonia and vinegar, he says, "Il y a certainement du feu dans ces deux liqueurs, sans quoi elles ne seraient point fluides;" and afterwards speaking of the connection between heat and permanent or gaseous elasticity, he says, "N'est-ce pas que l'air n'a plus alors la quantité de feu nécessaire pour faire jouir toutes ses parties, et pour le dégager de l'atmosphère engourdie qui le renferme?" The experiments which he made on the heat of fluids mixed together, of

different temperatures before their mixture, led him to remark the difference of the temperature when mixed from what might have been expected by combining the separate temperatures before mixture. Need I add that this is precisely the course of experiment and observation which led Black to his celebrated discovery of latent heat a quarter of a century later?

It was in these studies that the time passed at Cirey, in these various pursuits of philosophy, of history, of poetry. But some important incidents in Voltaire's life, beside his literary successes, happened during his intimacy with the Du Chatelets. His only sister, of whom he appears to have been fond, had died while he was in England, leaving a son and two daughters. Of these, now grown up, he took a parental care, and exerted himself to marry them suitably. One, in 1737, married M. Denis, a captain in the Régiment de Champagne, who died some years after (1744), and his widow ultimately came to live with her uncle, and passed nearly thirty years under his roof. Her sister married, some years later, a M. de Fontaine. During the same period of his residence at Cirey, the Prince Royal of Prussia, afterwards Frederick II., courted his acquaintance by letter, and began a correspondence of mutual compliment and even veneration, which lasted till he became king at his father's death, in 1740. At that time he made a fruitless attempt to make Voltaire fix his residence at Berlin, and would have almost let him dictate his own terms; but as long as Madame du Chatelet lived, these offers were frankly and peremptorily refused. Voltaire being near Brussels, the King, who happened to be in that neighbourhood soon after his accession, proposed coming to wait upon the poet; but, being prevented by a severe ague, Voltaire went to him, and had his first interview while the fit was upon

the royal patient in bed. He undertook to publish for him his first work, the 'Anti-Machiavel.' But unfortunately, while it was passing through the press, the death of Charles VI. left his daughter Maria Theresa in a condition of such weakness as exposed the royal combatant of Machiavel's principles to an irresistible temptation, and he made upon her province of Silesia one of the most unprovoked and unjustifiable attacks of which account has left any record. It is singular enough that, in the history which he afterwards wrote of the war, he in plain terms had stated as the cause of it, his possessing a fine army, and great treasure, which his father's recent death had left him, and his inability to resist the temptation of her weakness. Voltaire, on revising the work, struck this singular passage out of it; but, having kept a copy, he has given it in his 'Memoirs.'*

The favour which he was known to enjoy with Frederick induced the French ministry, three years after, to employ him in a secret mission, which he appears to have fulfilled with much success. He went to Berlin under cover of visiting his royal and literary correspondent, and obtained from him the assurance, that a declaration of war by France against England, then taking the Empress-Queen's part, would be followed by an immediate co-operation with France on his part. The favour which Voltaire thus obtained not only with the ministry, but with Madame de Pompadour, then all-powerful, produced an impression

* The passage thus erased and thus preserved is extremely curious, and for honesty or impudence has no parallel in the history of warriors:—

"Que l'on joigne à ces considérations, des troupes toujours prêtes d'agir, mon épargne bien remplie, et la vivacité de mon caractère, c'étaient les raisons que j'avais de faire la guerre à Marie Thérèse, Reine de Bohémie et de Hongrie,—l'ambition, l'intérêt, le désir de faire parler de moi, l'importèrent; et la guerre fut résolue." (Mém. 238.) If every man who enters upon a voluntary war would speak out, we should have the same commentary on the lives of all the butchers who disgrace and afflict our species. Nothing, certainly, can more eloquently describe their cold-blooded wickedness than these words of Frederick.

which all his fine writings had failed to make. He was allowed to enter the Academy, from which court influence had before excluded him; he was named gentleman of the King's chamber; and he received a pension of 2000 francs a year.

The tranquil pleasures of letters and of friendship, which form so much the burthen of his song during his residence at Cirey, were in the mean time suffering constant interruption, as he would represent, from the libels of persons every way below his notice, but, in reality, from his own irritable temper. The vehemence of the language in which he describes those attacks, makes the reader believe that the charges against him were of a heinous kind, and that the accusers were persons of importance; when both are examined, they generally turn out to be equally insignificant. One attack only, which absurdly accuses him of having failed to account for subscriptions to the 'Henriade,' he did right in requiring a friend to refute, who was personally acquainted with the whole matter, having devoted to his own use part of the money so received. He seems to have had some ground for complaining that this gentleman, a M. Theiriot, was slow in vindicating him; but his principal grievance is that Theiriot refused to attack the slanderer in his own person, and to repeat in public what he had so often written privately, that the accuser was the author of other libels against them both, and was the Abbé des Fontaines, a man of some reputation for ability, but leading a life of scandalous libelling, and whose ingratitude to Voltaire was sufficient to stamp him with infamy, as to his kind exertions had been owing the Abbé's escape from a charge of the most detestable nature. It is, however, a stain scarcely less deep on Voltaire's own memory, that although he firmly believed in the man's innocence, as indeed every one else did, he was no sooner enraged by the ungrateful return his services received, than he re-

curred to the false charges in all his letters—nay, even by a plain allusion in more than one passage of his poems, of which we have already seen an instance in the 'Discours sur l'Homme.' He took a more legitimate course of punishing him by prosecuting the libel (a satire entitled 'Voltairomanie), and compelled the vile and abandoned slanderer to sign a public denial of it, and a complete disbelief of its contents.

Under the vexation which such attacks gave him, he was comforted not only by the friendship which he found always in his home at Cirey, but by the unvarying kindness of M. le Cidville, a respectable magistrate of Rouen, fond of literature; by the steady friendship of M. le Comte d'Argental, a man of large fortune, and owner of the Isles de Rhé and Aix, of the west coast, and his wife; by the unbroken attachment of M. d'Argenson, Secretary of State, his brother, the War Minister, and the Duc de Richelieu. It should seem as if Voltaire was, in his familiar intercourse, the better for being kept under some restraint by the superior rank, or other preponderating qualities, of his friends. Some such calming influence was necessary for his irritable nature. Jealousy formed no part of his character; he had a rooted horror of envy, as mean and degrading; he was always well disposed to encourage rising merit and enjoy the success of his friends, perhaps all the more readily when he aided them by his patronage and counsels; but he was easily offended, ready to believe that any one had attacked him, prone to take alarm at intended insult or apprehended combination against him; and as his nature was fundamentally satirical, he was unable to resist the indulgence of the very humour of which he could so ill bear being himself made the subject. Those who were at all dependent on him, his Theiriots and his publishers, found much less magnanimity than kindness in his temper. With his equals he rarely continued very long on cordial terms. Maupertuis, indeed, had no excuse for his

proceedings; but the extravagances of J. J. Rousseau's crazy nature might well have been overlooked, and never should have been made the subjects of such deadly warfare as Voltaire waged against him. The other Rousseau's enmity he owed entirely to himself, as we have seen; it is extremely probable that Des Fontaines was set against him by hearing of his sarcasms on a subject to which all reference was proscribed; and his persevering attacks on Le Franc de Pompignan arose from no cause beyond some general reflections on philosophers in his inaugural discourse at the Academy; nor was he ever just enough to allow the singular merit of some, at least, of the Abbé's poetry.* It is certainly one, and a principal, cause of the constant disputes, the hot water he lived in, that he was always writing, generally writing something offensive of somebody; and almost as generally writing something which was likely to call down the indignation of the constituted authorities in Church and State. But had he kept his writings to himself, or only published them anonymously without any confidants, his pen would have less frequently disturbed his repose. Instead of this, he generally began by showing his compositions, often by suffering copies to be taken; sometimes these were published without his leave; but often he allowed them to be printed, and straightway complained when the authorship was discovered. His denials then knew no bounds, either for repetition or for solemnity; and we have seen in the instance of the 'Letters on England' how little scrupulous he was in what manner he confirmed his asseverations, by laying the blame upon others. To this double source of the difficulties into which his writings brought him with the government, and of the individual resentment

* It might be absurd enough in Mirabeau (the elder) to exalt him into the first of modern poets, as our Locke did Blackmore; yet few passages in Voltaire's own writings can compare with the famous simile of the Egyptians, and their sacrilegious abuse of the Sun.

which they occasioned, may very many of his quarrels and anxieties be traced.

But another circumstance must be mentioned, as throwing light upon his personal altercations with the friends he at various times esteemed. His nature was open and ardent; he had the irritability which oftentimes accompanies genius, but he had the warm temperament, the generous self-abandonment, the uncalculating effusion of sentiment, which is also its attendant, and which sixty years' living in the world never cured—hardly mitigated—in Voltaire. His expressions were, no doubt, stronger than his feelings; but we know that this strength of expression has a certain re-action, and excites the feelings in its turn; certainly is ever taken into the account when its object makes a bad or a cold requital, and irritates the minds from which it had proceeded, if in no other way, at least by wounding their pride. Nothing can be more extravagant than the technology of Voltaire's affections: "My dearest friend" is too cold to be almost ever used; it is "My dear and adorable friend;" "My guardian angel;" "My adorable friend;" and often to the Argentals especially the union of both, "My adorable angels." All philosophers are Newtons; all poets Virgils; all historians Sallusts: all marshals Cæsars. The work of the President Henault is not certainly "*son*," but "*votre* charmant, votre immortel ouvrage;" being the most dry and least charming history that ever was penned, and which never would be read but as a convenient chronicle. The expressions of affection, of eternal, warm, even passionate affection, are lavished constantly and indifferently. Nay, to one friend, a Marshal and Duke (Richelieu), he says, addressing him as Monseigneur, "Il y a dans Paris force vieilles et illustres catins, à qui vous avez fait passer de joyeux moments, mais il n'y en a point qui vous aime plus de moi."* With all this vehemence of feeling and facility

* Corr. Gén. iv. 193.

of effusion, as well as of exaggeration, there was joined an irritability that brought on cold fits occasionally, and then the snow, or rather the hail, fell as easily and abundantly as the tepid showers had before descended. Nothing can exceed his affection for his nieces, especially for Madame Denis; but he must have outraged her feelings severely, to draw from her such a letter as she wrote in 1754: "Ne me forcez pas à vous haïr"—"Vous êtes le dernier des hommes par le cœur"—"Je cacherai autant que je pourrais les vices de votre cœur"—are expressions used principally on account, not of his heart, which was sound, but his temper, which was uncontrolled, and they were used to him while lying on a sick bed at Colmar, which he had not quitted for six months. I shall have occasion afterwards to speak more particularly of his quarrels with Maupertuis, Frederick II., and Rousseau; in the first of which, the chief fault lay with the mathematician; in the second, the great king claims the whole blame; and in the third, Voltaire was most censurable. At present, I have only entered upon the topics which arise during his residence at Cirey.

The same exaggeration that pervades his expressions towards others, is observable in all that he writes respecting himself, whether upon the sufferings of his mind or those, somewhat more real, of his body. He had, unhappily, a feeble constitution, and having taken little care of it in early life, he was a confirmed invalid for the rest of his days; but especially between forty and sixty. He suffered from both bladder complaints and those of the alimentary canal; and his surgical maladies, beside the pain and irritation which they directly occasioned, gave him all the sufferings and inconveniences of a bad digestion. There was therefore a sufficient foundation for frequent recourse to the state of his health. But he writes as if he was not merely in constant danger: he is generally at the point of death; and it is observable that the more deeply he is

engaged in any vexatious dispute, and the more he has, or thinks he has, occasion to complain of maltreatment, the more regularly and the more vehemently does he describe his alarming, nay, his dying condition. In such circumstances it is a figure never wanting to round a period, or to fill up the measure of his own wrongs, and his adversary's oppressions. It is singular that a man of his genius, one especially who had so well studied the human heart, and painted so strikingly the dignity of our nature, should invariably, and even with the least worthy antagonist, prefer being plaintive to being powerful, and rather delight to be the object of compassion than of terror.

After above fourteen years had passed in the manner which has been described, accidental circumstances led to the formation of an intimacy between the family of M. du Chatelet and Stanislaus Leczinski, formerly King of Poland, and father of the reigning Queen of France. He resided at Luneville, where he kept an hospitable mansion as a great noble, rather than held his court as a Prince. He was fond of letters, and, though exceedingly devout, never departed from the principles of toleration, or the feelings of charity. In February, 1748, the Du Chatelets, accompanied by Voltaire, went to visit the King, and were so pleased with the reception which they received for some weeks, that after a few days passed at Cirey, they returned to Luneville; and this Court, small, cheerful, divested of all troublesome ceremony and cumbrous pomp, and presenting the best instance ever known of letters united with grandeur, and literary men patronised without being degraded, became their residence until the fatal event which, in the beginning of September in the following year, severed for ever the connection of the parties. The Marchioness continued her studies, and laboured with unwearied zeal in superintending the publication of her translation of Newton. The manuscript had been so far finished in the latter part of 1747, that the print-

ing had begun early in 1748; but there were many additions and corrections to make, and she worked on it with a degree of industry which is supposed to have seriously injured her during her pregnancy, extending from the month of December in the latter year. On the 4th of September, 1749, while engaged in an investigation connected with the 'Principia,' she was so suddenly taken in labour that a girl was born before she could be put to bed. In the course of a few days she was no more; and the Marquis and Voltaire having retired to Cirey, very soon quitted a place now gloomy with the most painful associations, and went to Paris, where Madame Denis, his niece, came to live with the poet. He continued to occupy the house in which the Marquis and he had before lived together as their town residence, when they occasionally quitted Cirey for the capital; and it was now, he said, endeared to him by its melancholy recollections. His niece endeavoured to distract his attention from the dreadful loss which he had sustained. It is needless to add how difficult a task this proved. For some weeks he appears to have lost the power of fixing his attention upon the occupations in which he attempted to engage. The first thing which tended to divert his mind from his affliction, was the interest he took in a comedy written by Madame Denis, 'La Coquette punie.' He admitted the talents which it showed, but was apprehensive about its success; and after much consideration he was found to be right in his reluctance to have it produced in public. In the course of two or three months his active mind recovered its elasticity, and he was occupied with the representation of the 'Orestes,' which, partly, as is supposed, through the cabals of Crebillon, met with a reception at first most stormy, but afterwards was suffered to obtain some share of success.

Many conjectures have, of course, been raised, as at the time much scandal was circulated, respecting the nature of the attachment between Voltaire and the

accomplished friend whom he thus lost. There seems upon the whole no sufficient reason to question its having been Platonic. The conduct of the husband, a respectable and honourable man, the character of the lady herself, but above all the open manner in which their intimacy was avowed, and the constant recognition of it by persons so respectable as the Argentals and Argensons, so punctilious as the Deffands and the Henaults, seem to justify this conclusion. It is well known that, both in former times and in our own, the laws of French society are exceedingly rigorous, not indeed to the exclusion of the realities, but to the saving of the appearances—"Les convenances avant tout" is the rule. It is never permitted, where a grave suspicion exists of a criminal intercourse, that the slightest appearance of intimacy should be seen in public between the parties. Voltaire's letters to all his correspondents, in which he speaks of Emily to some, of Madame la Marquise to others, of Chatelet-Newton to others, giving her remembrances to them, and himself inviting them to the château, all seems wholly inconsistent with the rules of social intercourse observed by our neighbours, on the supposition of her having been his mistress. Perhaps we may add to this the proof afforded by Frederick II. always acknowledging her, and constantly sending his regards to her. It may be noted that when the French king's mistress, Pompadour, ventured, with many apologies, to send him a respectful, even humble message, his good brother of Prussia shortly and drily said, "Je ne la connais pas."*

As soon as the King of Prussia learnt Madame du

* An expression which occurs in Voltaire's letter to Madame du Deffand, announcing the Marchioness's death, seems strange. Though it clearly proves nothing, yet it was an extraordinary thing to say at such a moment. He asks to be allowed to weep with her for one "qui avec ses faiblesses avait une âme respectable."—(Cor. Gén. iii. 365.) In all probability this referred to her violent temper, of which Madame du D. might have heard him complain, as he certainly suffered much under it.

Chatelet's death, he lost no time in desiring Voltaire to come and live in Berlin, now that the only obstacle to this plan was removed; but at first he could not listen to any such proposition. In the course, however, of the next six months he began to feel the former thraldom of the French government and clergy; he was once more plagued with the slanders of the press, which did not even spare Madame du Chatelet's memory; he formed to himself the picture of happiness under a sovereign who protected letters, cultivated them himself, refused all countenance to persecutions of any sort, and had long expressed for him the warmest friendship. He believed he should at length be able to lead a tranquil life of literary occupation; he hoped to enjoy the *otium* and forgot the *dignitas;* and he set out for Berlin, where he arrived about the end of July, 1750.

The arrangements which Frederick II., enchanted with this splendid acquisition, immediately made, were of a sufficiently liberal kind. A pension of 20,000 francs a-year, with 4000 for his niece should she join him and then survive him; the rank of chamberlain; the higher order of knighthood, and apartments at the palace of Potsdam, where the monarch lived ten months in the year—seemed an ample establishment, especially when added to an income already larger by a great deal than any other literary man ever enjoyed, for he possessed from his own funds 80,000 francs, or above £3000 a-year. The work to be done for this remuneration was to read and correct the king's writings, to be his companion at his leisure hours, and, above all, to attend his suppers, the meal at which he chiefly loved to take his relaxation after the fatigues of the day. That the society of this singularly gifted prince was captivating we cannot have any doubt. He had a great variety of information, abounded in playful and original wit, somewhat of Voltaire's own kind, was of the most easy and unceri-

monious manners, and had such equal spirits as cast an air of gaiety over his whole society. It is not a matter of wonder that the man whom he chiefly delighted to honour should have been enchanted with this intercourse, seasoned as it was with boundless admiration of his own genius never very coldly expressed, though always cleverly and variously, more especially when we bear in mind the fundamental fact that this host and master, who chose to make himself the poet's playfellow, was a powerful monarch, and covered with the laurels of a conqueror, as well as sustained by the troops and treasures of a prince.

Twelve months glided away in this pleasing dream; for dream after all it proved to be. That which his philosophers never forgot, it appeared that he himself, the philosopher king, forgot as little, his kingly station; and the freaks of the royal temperament, suppressed for a while, broke out on the first convenient opportunity, changing at once the whole aspect of Voltaire's position, and reducing his relation with his "*royal friend*" to the ordinary standard, which retains the "*royal*" and converts "*friend*" into master.

Immediately after his arrival an incident had occurred which might have opened his eyes to the claw that lurked beneath its velvet covering. Madame de Pompadour had, as has been mentioned, with many roundabout phrases, and with many humble and trembling apologies for such a liberty, ventured to offer her dutiful respects to his Majesty through Voltaire. The very unexpected answer, from one, too, whom oily words cost so little, was—"*I don't know her.*" The unfortunate messenger would have done better to revolve this in his mind rather than very falsely write a report to the lady, in which Achilles was represented as receiving courteously the compliments of Venus. But he had not been four months at Potsdam when he had a fresh illustration of his great friend's character, and one all the more important for his own

government that it related to Frederick's treatment of those dependents whom he most favoured with his professions of esteem. M. Darget's wife died; the king wrote him a letter, "touching, pathetic, even highly Christian," on the sad occurrence; and on the same day amused himself with writing an epigram abusing the deceased. That accounts of the dissolute life secretly led by the philosophic sovereign had reached the poet cannot be doubted, as he plainly avows that had he lived in the court of Pasiphaë he would not have troubled himself about her amours.* He afterwards entered fully into this most nauseous subject in his 'Memoirs.' Be the account there given of other parties of Frederick's day exaggerated or exact, one thing is plain, for here Voltaire speaks as an eye-witness, and speaks against himself: the suppers of Sans Souci (the *noctes cœnæque Deum*), so much the subject of jealousy among the scientific and literary men of the court, were disgraced by the exhibition of such brutal indecencies in the ornaments of the royal table, that it requires no small courage in any one to confess having been present a second time after once witnessing those enormities.

But after about thirteen months had elapsed of what appears to have been uninterrupted enjoyment in spite of these wrongs and these drawbacks, an enjoyment not broken by the indications he perceived of the great jealousy which his fame excited among his learned brethren, it came to Voltaire's ears that his informant, La Metherie, a clever, agreeable, half-crazy physician about court, having mentioned to Frederick how great this jealousy was, the philosophic king replied, "I shall want him for a year longer at most; and then one throws away the rind after sucking the orange." From that moment Voltaire began to feel, as well he might, his footing insecure; and he soon found proofs of the

* Cor. Gén. iii. 448 (17 Nov., 1750).

extravagant phrases, which he had believed were exclusively applied to himself, being freely and habitually used by the king towards persons of whom he was known to have a very mean opinion. Nevertheless the enchantment continued, and would, in all probability, have lasted until he was actually dismissed, had not a quarrel, in which the intriguing, jealous spirit of Maupertuis involved him, led to a resolution that he would leave Berlin as soon as he could withdraw the funds which he had placed in the country.

Maupertuis was a man of some mathematical acquirements, but little depth, and no genius. He had originally been a captain of horse, and had, on leaving the army, cultivated science. Having acquired some reputation, he was sent, as has already been mentioned, at the head of the commission to measure a degree of the meridian in Lapland. Clairault was one of the party, and, being a very young man, was, of course, placed under Maupertuis, then much past the middle age. The successful performance of this service, a matter requiring care and patience, but nothing more, confirmed the theory of the earth being an oblate spheroid, flattened towards the poles; and so puffed up was the philosopher with this poor triumph, that, after publishing a book recording the history of the expedition, in which he carefully suppressed all merit but his own, he actually had himself represented in a picture, with his hands on a globe, in the act of flattening it at the two poles. Frederick, who was wholly ignorant of physical science, was deceived by the noise which this person's name, or his tongue, made in the world, and urged him to live at Berlin, where he was named President of the Academy which the king had founded. It is a striking proof how perilous royal meddling in scientific matters is, that the illustrious Euler was one of the strangers whom his liberalities had attracted, and that over his head was placed the flattener of the poles and the flatterer of the king.

Such a personage was sure to be jealous of Voltaire, whose arrival occurred long after his own place had been taken. Accordingly, we find that he gave indications of this immediately. A month after he came, Voltaire describes him as having become unsociable,* referring doubtless to his very different behaviour when he lived for months his fellow-guest at Cirey; and before four months had elapsed, we find him painted drolly enough "as taking the poet's dimensions harshly with his quadrant," and "allowing some portion of envy to enter into his problems." In the course of the next year this envy broke out. Of the most intriguing disposition, he used his access to the king for the base purpose of bearing tales against Voltaire. An adventurer, called La Beaumelle, who had been driven from Copenhagen, where he was a popular preacher, who then came under false colours to Berlin,† was taken up by Maupertuis, and both libelled Voltaire, pirated his works, and propagated stories of his having slandered the king. Then came a statement by Kœnig, now professor in Holland, but a member of the Berlin Academy, refuting Maupertuis' favourite doctrine of the principle of least action, and affirming, on the authority of letters from Leibnitz, that it was no new discovery. In truth, Leibnitz had refuted it, as he well might, for, in the form in which he had given it, the principle‡ rests upon an imperfect induction—chiefly on the reflection of light, and is at variance with many other phenomena, and even with the reflected motion of all bodies except light, inasmuch as no other body being perfectly elastic, the reflected line never can be the shortest possible between the point

* Cor. Gén. iii. 411, 438.

† The charge made by Voltaire, Condorcet, and his other friends, respecting Madame Maintenon's Letters has been refuted by La Beaumelle's family.

‡ Euler, and still more Lagrange, gave the sound view of the doctrine; but Maupertuis must be admitted, though after Leibnitz, to have come near it.

of impact and any given plane. The Courtier-President was enraged; he summoned his academicians; he had his case laid before them; he remained absent from the sitting, while an adherent proposed the expulsion of Kœnig, on the ground of his having forged the letters of Leibnitz, because the death of the person from whom he had obtained the copies prevented him from producing the originals. Nothing can well be conceived more outrageous than this proceeding on the part of a scientific body, all the members of which were paid their salaries according to the discretion of the President, and so were more or less dependent upon him. But there was yet a lower meanness behind. Maupertuis having caused Kœnig's expulsion, affected to solicit of the Academy his pardon and restitution. But this the honest Switzer's just indignation prevented; for he insisted on retiring, having indeed sent his resignation from Holland before he could hear of the Academy's first vote. It was another, and an infamous act of this President, to employ his influence with the Princess of Orange for the purpose of depriving Kœnig of his place of librarian to that lady.

It was always an honourable distinction of Voltaire that he instinctively planted himself as a champion in the front of all who were the victims of persecution or injustice, whatever form it assumed. His feelings towards Maupertuis, whom he had formerly all but idolized, and now heartily disliked, certainly contributed to make him take Kœnig's part with extraordinary zeal, and display great bitterness against his oppressor. But we have no right to doubt that he would at all events have been found strongly on his side, the rather from having lived for so long a time under the same roof with him at Cirey. Maupertuis had, as if deprived of reason, recently published some speculations full of the most revolting absurdities, such as a proposal for penetrating to the earth's centre, and another for examining the nature of the human faculties by dissecting

the brains of various races of men. The field thus afforded for satire, what witty enemy could forbear to enter? Least of all, certainly, could one like Voltaire refrain. His defence of Kœnig consisted in part of a bitter satire on the President, which soon made the round of the European literary circles, was greedily devoured on account of a superscription the fittest of the age to give it currency, and was relished far more from the gratification its scurrility afforded to malice, than from any intrinsic merit which it possessed. It is among the poorest and the most tedious of its author's pieces; and when it is said to have destroyed Maupertuis' reputation, whoever reads it must feel satisfied of its utter impotence to injure any one but its author, had that reputation rested upon a solid foundation. Unfortunately for Maupertuis, he had been placed high, with very moderate pretensions; he had exposed himself to just censure by his treatment of a modest, an able, and a learned man; he had covered himself with ridicule by writings which seemed to argue a deprivation of reason; and it required not the 'Diatribe of Dr. Akakia' to hurl him from the place which he usurped.*

Frederick committed on this occasion his second error respecting this unfortunate person; but it was a far more fatal one than the former. He chose to enter himself into the strife as a combatant, and he was wholly unprovided with resources. He published a pamphlet against Kœnig and Voltaire, in which he betrayed, as might be expected, entire ignorance of the subject. All scientific Europe took Kœnig's part, though it is painful to reflect that the man at the head of it sided with the King and his President; but though that man was Euler, he was one of the Academy who had been drawn into the shameful sentence of condemnation. His authority, how venerable soever,

* It is generally said that he had at one time the misfortune to be confined in a lunatic asylum; his latter conduct certainly seems to countenance the report.

proved of no avail; the universal voice of the scientific world was against the whole proceedings of the confederates; and the king was reduced to the humiliation of appealing from the reason of his readers to the authority of his prerogative. He had the incredible folly of causing Voltaire's pamphlet to be burnt by the hands of the hangman.

It was now clear that the tempest had both set in and was unappeasable. The royal disputant had received additional offence from a law-suit in which Voltaire had been obliged to arrest the Court broker, a Jew, for debt. All explanations were unavailing; he sent back his chamberlain's key and his order of knighthood, and resigned his pension. He wrote a kind of love verses with them; they were returned to him. He humbled himself in the very dust with protestations of his innocence, when charged with having libelled the King; and, among other jests at his cost, likened his office of correcting the royal French to the functions of the laundress with the royal linen. His protestations, and his extravagant demonstrations of sorrow, were quite enough to disgrace the one party, but they failed to appease the other. A haughty and imperious answer alone was given, that "he was astonished at Voltaire's having the effrontery to deny facts as clear as the sun, instead of confessing his guilt; and that, if his works merited statues, his conduct deserved a gaol." No spark of pride, or even of ordinary dignity, was raised by this intolerable treatment, but only endless wailings as of one literally dying of a broken heart, mingled with protestations of duty, gratitude, attachment, and pitiful appeals to the compassion of his tender and benevolent nature.

Miserable as this picture of Voltaire's weakness is, we may be permitted to doubt if it is not surpassed in baseness by the flattery with which he so long fed his royal friend. He, no doubt, corrected his bad French, and often objected to his poetical errors, or the sins

of his compositions against good taste. These acts of friendship, these real services, it is probable Frederick had enough of the royal author to dislike; and possibly some such feeling may have led to the exclamation respecting oranges. But assuredly he had far less right to complain, than Voltaire had to blush, at the shameful excess of adulation which could make him desire his own 'History of Louis XIV.' to be "placed under Frederick's Memoirs of the House of Brandenburgh, as the servant below the master" (Cor. avec les Souverains, i. 756); and after sitting up all night to read it, exclaim, "Mon Dieu! que tout cela est net, élégante, précis, et surtout philosophique; on voit une génie toujours au-dessus son sujet (thus subjecting the owner himself of that genius): l'histoire des mœurs, du gouvernement, de la religion, est un chef-d'œuvre" (ib. 740). And all this about the worst history that ever was written—tawdry, rambling, conceited, inflated—in a style about as near Livy's or Voltaire's own as that of Ossian's poems.

After a delay of two months the King's resentment to all appearance cooled, or yielded to his prudence. The leave to depart was granted, and he desired to see Voltaire before he went. A long interview took place, and a reconciliation; in the course of which it is positively asserted that the king sealed the treaty by joining, or rather originating, several sallies against Maupertuis. During the week that followed before his departure Voltaire supped every night at the royal table, and on the 26th of March, 1753, he set out. After passing a month at the Court of Saxe Gotha he arrived at Francfort on the Maine, where his niece, Madame Denis, met him. Here they were both unexpectedly and rudely arrested at the instance of a Prussian agent, who demanded, by the King's authority, the delivery of the key, the ribbon, and a volume of his Majesty's poetry. This volume was a privately printed collection; only a few copies had been struck

off; and it contained a poem—'Le Palladium,' in the style of the 'Pucelle,' but attacking living characters. As Voltaire's baggage had gone by another route to Paris, both the uncle and niece were detained for some time till the book was recovered; and they were then, and apparently without any pretence of authority, seized, upon leaving Francfort, at the instance of another of the Prussian authorities. They were now imprisoned, under a guard, for twelve days, with every circumstance of insult, to the extent of Madame Denis being forced to sleep the whole time of their imprisonment in a room with four soldiers standing sentinel round her bed, and without any female attendant. It must be observed that the King had written a letter desiring these effects to be returned to him two months before Voltaire left Berlin; but the reconcilement which had afterwards taken place naturally enough led to the belief that this requisition was countermanded. The exactions to which he was exposed during this detention, and the sums taken from his trunks, are stated by him as amounting to the whole money which he had received during all his service at Berlin. This treatment made, and naturally made, an impression upon his mind which no time seems ever to have removed.* Had he remained near the King, the same resentment would not have kept possession of him; but he was now beyond the reach both of the royal seductions and the royal power; and he vented his indignation in that scandalous chronicle of Frederick's life and manners, which was plainly his main object in the autobiography, composed as soon as he quitted Francfort, and not destroyed after the second reconcilement, which took place in 1757.

The style of the correspondence afterwards, when Frederick had him not in his power, and when distance enabled him to see with more impartial eyes the

* See Cor. Gén. v. 67 (1757), but it breaks out often afterwards.

character of his royal friend, affords a contrast to all that preceded, quite refreshing to the admirers of genius. We at last have Voltaire writing like a man, and no longer either fawning like a courtier parasite, or whining like a child in his addresses to the king. Frederick, on his part, never forgets his alleged grievances; he constantly refers to them, but he does full justice to the merits of his illustrious correspondent, in whom he at length finds the more dignified qualities of an independent mind. As to Maupertuis, stung to madness by the merited contempt into which he had fallen through his own folly and misconduct, and discovering how little the alliance of a monarch can avail the party to philosophical controversy, he vented his spleen in a challenge, which he sent after Voltaire, who received it at Leipzig, and returned such an answer as it deserved; though no sarcasm could now make the poor man more ridiculous than he had made himself. There seems no ground for believing the random charge thrown out by Collini, Voltaire's secretary, in his 'Memoirs,' that Maupertuis had a hand in the shameful transaction of Francfort. Indeed the blame of that appears to fall much rather upon the low agents employed than even upon Frederick himself, though he grossly neglected his duty in not bringing them to condign punishment.

Madame Denis left her uncle and returned to Paris as soon as he was safe in Alsace, where he had a mortgage or rent charge on the Duke of Wirtemberg's estates; and he remained at Colmar for several months, which he chiefly passed in bed, suffering very much under a complication of diseases. He had no difficulty in going to Paris, had he been so disposed; for there was not any prohibition; the king had overlooked his going to Berlin, and had even continued his pension and his situation in the household, though he had taken away the place of historiographer. But it seemed as if the cabals he so much dreaded were still at work;

and feeling that he could not be sure of a quiet as well as a distinguished reception in the capital and at court, where he had put forth several feelers, and been ready enough to worship Madame Pompadour, he remained in Alsace for nearly two years, only going for a few weeks to the waters of Plombières, where his niece and the Argentals came to meet him. He also went to Lyons, where Cardinal Tencin, the archbishop, saw him, and considered himself under the necessity of avoiding his society, notwithstanding his being uncle of Voltaire's dearest friend, M. Argental's wife. The people, however, took another view of the matter, and held festivals in honour of the great poet and wit, by inviting him to their theatre and playing his tragedies before him with the most enthusiastic acclamations. He was now ordered to try the waters of Aix in Savoy, and for this purpose he must pass through Geneva. There he consulted the famous Dr. Tronchin, who at once forbade that mineral, and he purchased sixty acres of land near the town, where he was made to pay twice as much as it would have cost him near Paris. He afterwards bought the villa of Tournay, since called Ferney, in the French territory, and about a league from Geneva. In summer he went to a house which he purchased near Lausanne, called Monnier; and in these retreats, agreeable for their scenery in summer, but subject to the curse of a rigorous climate in winter, he spent the remaining portion of his life.

Frederick was reconciled to him in 1757. He wrote him a kind letter in August of that year, when he had, in consequence of his disaster at Kolin on the 18th of June, been reduced to great straits. This renewed their correspondence. In September he was so much more desperate that he wrote to Voltaire, declaring his resolution to kill himself should he lose another battle; and he said the same thing in the poem which he addressed to M. d'Argens, then in his employ. He became more resigned after this, and resolved to brave

all dangers. He says, in one of his poems addressed to Voltaire, 9th October,

> "Je dois, en affrontant l'orage,
> Penser, écrire, et mourir en Roi."

Immediately after (5th November) he gained the battle of Rosbach, in which the French army under Soubise were seized with a panic and fled disgracefully. But aware of his difficulties, he wished to renew the negotiations for peace which he had two months before in vain attempted to open with the Duc de Richelieu, then commanding in Westphalia. The Cardinal Tencin, still a minister, though superseded in active influence by the Abbé, afterwards Cardinal Bernis, had always been averse to the Austrian alliance, which Madame Pompadour, from personal resentment towards Frederick, mainly aided in bringing about; and he employed Voltaire's intimacy with the Margravine of Baireuth, Frederick's sister, to open a negotiation. The letters passed through Voltaire and that Princess. Frederick readily acceded to the suggestion. The letter from the margravine on her brother's part was sent in this manner to the cardinal, who wrote, enclosing it, to the king of France. He received a dry answer, that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs would communicate his intentions. That secretary, the Abbé Bernis, did so; he dictated to the cardinal an answer to the margravine, refusing to negotiate, and the cardinal is represented by Voltaire (Mém., Œuv., i. 295) as having died of mortification in a fortnight. The sudden change of tone in Frederick towards Voltaire, happening at so peculiar a moment, the very fortnight before he endeavoured to draw M. de Richelieu into a negotiation, leaves no doubt that he intended to avail himself of the poet's known intimacy with the General in furtherance of this scheme. Voltaire had, some days before this revival of friendly relations, been writing of him as he usually did. On the 6th of August, 1757, he had, in

one of his letters, said, "L'ennemi publique est pris de tous côtés. Vive Marie Thérèse!" (Cor. Gén., v. 21.)

During the two years of his residence in Alsace Voltaire had done little more than correct his works, and publish the 'Annales de l'Empire,' a history undertaken at the request of the Grand Duchess of Saxe Gotha, and upon the plan of the President Henault's dull work. But at Berlin he finished his 'Siècle de Louis XIV.,' the materials of which he had brought with him from Paris. He also began at that time his correspondence with Diderot and D'Alembert, then engaged in editing the famous 'Encyclopédie,' the effects of which he very early foresaw, and to encourage it gave his best efforts, both while at Berlin and after his establishment near Geneva. Whatever we may deem respecting the tendency of the work (on its merits there cannot be two opinions), it is impossible not to have our admiration excited as well as to take a lively interest in the zeal and untiring activity which the aged philosopher displayed in encouraging his young correspondents. On this remarkable occasion he put forth all those qualities which form a party chief and gain over the warm support of his followers—ardour, good humour, patience, courage, tolerance, activity, knowledge, skill. The 'Encyclopédie,' as is well known, was, after a few years, no longer suffered to appear openly in France. In 1751, and the following years, the first seven volumes appeared at Paris, under Diderot and D'Alembert; in 1758 it was stopped, at a time when its sale had reached no less than 3000 ('Cor. Gén.,' v. 127), and the remaining ten volumes were published in 1765 at Neufchâtel under Diderot alone. The four volumes of Supplement were published in 1776 and 1777 at Amsterdam. All the eleven volumes of plates were published at Paris between 1762 and 1772, and the supplemental volume of plates in 1777. The whole of this great work thus consisted of thirty-three folio volumes. Some of Voltaire's articles

are clever, and abound with good reflections. The greater number of them are too slight, having the fault which he imputes to many of the other contributors in his 'Letters,' when he observes that they are fitter for a magazine than an encyclopædia.

The quarrel with Frederick appears to have renewed in Voltaire's mind the admiration with which, while in England, he had been smitten for Swift's writings, especially his immortal 'Gulliver.' He had, while at Cirey, written the 'Voyage de Scarmentado,' and the 'Zadig.' 'Micromegas' was added soon after his return to France. A careful revision of all these was the fruit of this revived taste for the philosophical and satirical romance. Soon after his establishment at Geneva he finished his great historical work, of all his writings the most valuable, and perhaps the most original, the 'Essai sur les Mœurs des Nations;' and he then produced the composition which in originality comes next to it, and in genius is the most perfect of all his performances, the celebrated 'Candide.' The 'Essai' had been in great part written at Cirey, but being printed much later, it was first published in 1757,* the 'Candide' early in 1759. The former, of course, was avowed, but the latter was studiously denied even to the Theiriots and Thibouvilles, his most familiar friends, though Frederick II. appears to have been intrusted with the secret at the very date of these denials.†

The two master-pieces which I have now mentioned in one respect differed materially: the design of the History was quite original; of the Romance there had

* It was the fate of many writings left by Voltaire at Cirey, and among others, of some critical dissertations and translations for the Essay, to be burnt by the base fanaticism or low jealousy of the Marquess's brother, after Madame du Chatelet's death. The 'General Dissertation on History' was written in 1764, and published the year after. Voltaire, in the advertisement prefixed to it in an edition of his works, erroneously mentions it as written at Cirey.

† Cor. avec les Souv. i. 796.—Cor. Gén. v. 225, 329.

been examples before. But in the execution both possessed a very high merit, and a merit of the very same kind—the truth with which great principles were seized, and the admirable lightness of the touches by which both the opinions and the comments upon them were presented to the mind.

Before Voltaire's, there was no history which did not confine itself to the record, more or less chronological, more or less detailed, of wars and treaties, conquests or surrenders; the succession, by death, or usurpation, or marriage, of princes; and the great public calamities, as plague, or inundation, or fire, which afflicted mankind from natural causes. The proceedings of councils, or synods, or parliaments, were referred to, but chiefly as connected with the wars of the countries in which they met, or the succession or the deposition of the sovereigns that ruled over them. No measure or proportion was observed between the events thus chronicled, in respect of their various degrees of importance, still less was their influence upon the condition of the people described, or even noted. To deliver the facts, to describe the scenes and the actors, relating the events, and giving an estimate of their characters, with perhaps a few moral reflections or inferences occasionally suggested by the narrative—was deemed the proper, and the only office of history. The ancients, our masters in this as in all other walks of literature, painted both scenes and men with a vivid pencil; they gave, too, chiefly in the form of speeches, supposed to have been made by the personages whose actions were related, their own reflections upon events, or the sentiments of those personages which actuated their conduct. The same thing was done by modern historians more formally, in dissertations interspersed with the story. But in all these writings there was one common cardinal defect, one omission equally to be lamented. First, the same particularity of detail, which was desirable when important transactions or

interesting occurrences were to be recorded, became tedious, and only loaded the memory with useless facts, when matters of usual occurrence, or of inferior interest, were to be related; yet the historian's duty was understood to require that none should be left out. Next, there was no account given of the manners and habits of the people, the bearing of events upon their condition, the influence of men's character upon their fortunes; it was even very rare to find the conduct of nations described, unless in so far as it might be connected with the conduct of some distinguished individuals; and generally speaking, all that happened to a people while enjoying the blessings of peace—their arts, their commerce, their education, their wealth, their prosperity or decline, their civilization—all was either wholly neglected, or passed with scarcely any notice, while the most careful attention was given to every detail of battles, and sieges, and individual exploits in arms, of which the importance was often wholly insignificant, and the interest died with the relation. There had at all times, indeed, been some pictures, or rather descriptions, expressly devoted to figuring forth the manners and customs of a particular people. Cæsar had thus described, in a portion of his 'Commentaries,' both the Germans and the Britons: Tacitus had written a work expressly on the German manners and character. But these were either works apart from history, or episodes in its course; the history of a nation was never considered to be anything but the story of its wars and its rulers; and what is still more material, these works, excellent and valuable as they are, only give a description, and not a narrative; only a picture without any motion; only the representation of a people's manners and condition at a given time, and not the history of the changes which those manners undergo, and the varying and progressive alteration in that condition.

Voltaire, whose daring genius was never trammelled by the precedents of former times, or the works of pre-

ceding writers, at once saw how grievous, in both its branches, was the error thus committed,—the reducing all events to one level, and keeping general description apart from the account of particulars,—and he resolved to apply the correction by writing a history of nations, giving, in his narrative of events, their spirit and their tendency rather than their details. For we shall greatly err if we suppose that he only supplied the second defect now pointed out, and joined with ordinary history the account of the manners and condition of nations at different stated periods of their progress. He undertook to banish the servile presentation of all events in all their details, according to their succession in order of time; to separate the wheat from the chaff, and the ore from the dross; to seize on the salient points, the really important parts of each period, giving as it were the cream only, and preserving the true spirit of history; and with all this to give, at every step and in every relation, whether of particular occurrences or of general subjects in any one country, a comparative view of similar occurrences and similar subjects in other countries, or the contrasts which the analogous history of those other countries presents to the view of the philosophical historian. This last characteristic of the work is, in some respects, the most distinguishing and the most remarkable of the whole; for it should seem as if the author never deals with any subject in the history of any one country but he has present to his mind, by the extraordinary reach of his memory, the history of every other which stands in any relation, whether of resemblance or of diversity, to the matter immediately under review.

This work has thus become the true history of human society, indeed of the human race. He limits himself, no doubt, in time, beginning with the age of Charlemagne; but he fixes no bounds of space to his survey. From that period, the middle of the eighth century, to the middle of the seventeenth, upwards of nine cen-

turies, he traverses the whole globe, to gather in each quarter, at each time, all the changes that have taken place in society—all the events that have happened among men—the story of all the eminent individuals that have flourished—all the revolutions that have affected the fortunes of nations or of princes; and neglecting everywhere the trivial matters, however authentically vouched, he fixes our attention only on the things which deserve to be remembered as having exerted a sensible influence upon the destinies of the world. In proportion to the real intrinsic importance of each event, or to the interest which it is calculated to excite, is the minuteness with which its circumstances are detailed. But no event is given in detail merely because it is fitted to excite a vulgar and ignorant wonder; while those things are recorded which are of real moment, although their particulars may seem to create little interest. To the work was prefixed a treatise on the 'Philosophy of History,' but the whole book might justly be designated by that name.

Such was the design; the execution of it has already been characterised as marked by the peculiar felicity of the author in seizing upon the more remarkable features of each subject, and presenting both the accounts of events or of individuals, and the reflections to which they justly lead, at once with great brevity and with striking effect. But it is also to be remarked that in the two great qualities of the historian he eminently excels—his diligence and his impartiality. To take an example of the former, we may observe that it would not be easy anywhere to find a more accurate account of the Council of Trent than in the 172nd chapter; and there are, in various other parts of the work, marks to be perceived of his having consulted even the writers and authorities least commonly-known for the materials of his narrative or subjects of his reflections. A testimony of the greatest value was, indeed, borne to his learning and accuracy by no less an

authority than Robertson, himself the most faithful of historians, according to Gibbon's description. Speaking of "that extraordinary man whose genius no less enterprising than universal has attempted almost every species of literary composition, in many excelled, and in all, save where he touches religion, is instructive and agreeable;" the great historian adds that had Voltaire only given his authorities, "many of his readers who only consider him as an entertaining and lively writer, would have found that he is a learned and well-informed historian."

Voltaire in no part of his work disguises his peculiar opinions, but in none can he fairly be charged with making his representation of the facts bend to them. It would not be easy to imagine subjects upon which he was more likely to be warped by those opinions than in relating the conduct of Luther and Calvin, and in describing Leo X. and the other Popes; yet full justice is rendered to the character and the accomplishments of Leo, as well as to his coarse and repulsive antagonists; and with all the natural prejudice against a tyrannical Pontiff, a fiery zealot, and a gloomy religious persecutor, we find him praising the attractive parts of the Pope's character, the amiable qualities of the apostle's and the rigid disinterestedness of the intolerant reformer's, as warmly as if the former had never domineered in the Vatican, and the latter had not outraged, the one all taste and decorum by his language, the other all humanity by his cruelty.

But it is a merit of as high an order, and one which distinguishes all Voltaire's historical writings, that he exercises an unremitting caution in receiving improbable relations, whether supported by the authority of particular historians or avouched by the general belief of mankind. Here his sagacity never fails him—here his scepticism is never hurtful. The admirable tract in which he assembled a large body of his critical doubts under the appropriate title of 'Le Pyrrhonisme de

l'Histoire,' is only a concentrated sample of the bold spirit in which he examined all the startling narratives to which our assent is so frequently asked, an assent, before the age of Voltaire, as unthinkingly yielded. In the article 'History' of the 'Encyclopédie,' we find much of what is now the general faith upon the early history of Rome, but which in those days was never dreamt of. The same unflinching boldness and the same unfailing acuteness pervade all the work of which we have now been discoursing. We may safely affirm that no historical treatise was ever given to the world more full of solid and useful instruction. That there should have crept into the execution of so vast a design, perhaps the most magnificent that ever was conceived, errors of detail, is of no consequence whatever to its general usefulness, any more than the petty inequalities on the surface of a mirror are sufficient to destroy its reflecting, and, if concave, its magnifying power; because we read the book not for its minute details, but for its general views, and are not injured by these faults any more than the astronomer is by the irregularities of the speculum which might impede the course of an insect, as these inaccuracies might the study of one who was groping for details when he should have been looking for great principles. But whoever has studied history as it ought to be studied, will confess his obligations to this work, holding himself indebted to it for the lamp by which the annals of the world are to be viewed.

The example so happily set by the 'Essai' was soon followed by the other eminent writers of the age. It had the most important and salutary effect upon the great æra of historical composition which now opened. Hume's first volume, 'The Stuarts from the Accession of James I. to the Death of Charles I.,' had been published in 1754, and had contained a most able appendix, giving a general account of the government, and manners, and condition of the country at James's

death. Whether he had seen the imperfect and partial copies of the 'Essai' which had been surreptitiously printed as early as the winter of 1753, some months before his own was published, or the still more imperfect publications of many chapters in the 'Mercure de France' several years earlier, we have no means of ascertaining. Voltaire himself, in a panegyrical notice of Hume's plan ('Remarques sur l'Essai No. 3,' in vol. v. of the work, p. 355), assumes that he had adopted his plan of writing history; and, in fact, the 'Siècle de Louis XIV.,' of which nearly one-fourth is written on the plan of Hume's appendix, had been published as far back as 1751, and was in such universal circulation as to have been repeatedly pirated. But there can be no doubt that Robertson's celebrated view of society (forming the first volume of Charles V.) was suggested by the 'Essai,' for he intimates that the occasion for his work would have been superseded by the 'Essai' had Voltaire's authorities for the facts been referred to. That Gibbon, Henry, Watson, Rulhières, all adopted the new system is clear.

On his other histories we need not dwell; they are in every respect performances of an ordinary merit. The 'Charles XII.' is the best; the 'Peter the Great' the worst. The former has the great merit of a clear, equable, and interesting narrative, apparently collected from good sources, and given with impartiality. The latter, beside its flimsy texture, was written in too close communication with the Russian court to be very trustworthy; and it is not only glaringly partial on points which, while independent and unbiassed, he had treated with honesty, but it falls into the most vulgar errors on the merits of Peter's proceedings.*

* A contemptuous denial of the charge of poisoning his son, and an elaborate vindication of the Czar's conduct (part ii. chap. 10), is at complete variance with the 'Anecdotes' previously published. He had also in his 'Charles XII.,' written in 1727, thirty years before his correspondence with the Empresses Elizabeth and Catherine, described the Czar as "cutting off heads in a drunken debauch to show his dexterity." (liv. 1.)

The 'Siècle de Louis XIV.' holds a middle rank between the two, and it has some of the merits of the general or philosophical history. But how far it can be relied on for perfect fairness is another matter. He himself admits that it was necessary to write at a distance from France, a work which treated of men's conduct whose near relations still lived in the society which he frequented at Paris. "To what," he asks, "should I have been exposed at home? Thirty different correspondences even here have I been obliged to carry on after my first edition was published, all owing to the difficulty of satisfying the distant cousins of those whose history I had been relating." But if any proof were wanting that his distance did not wholly protect him from bias—and, indeed, every one must see that he was likely to feel such motives if he did not mean his banishment from Paris to be perpetual—we have the evidence in such letters as that in which he complains that such a one is not satisfied, but has made remonstrances, and says that of another applicant's ancestor he has not been able to speak so favourably as was desired, but yet that he had gone a good deal out of his way to embellish them (*enjoliver*) as was desired.* His admiration of Louis XIV. was

In both the 'Charles XII.' and 'Peter I.' we find nearly the same unaccountable credulity as to the wonders related of the Czar's studies—his learning watchmaking, surgery (to be able to dress wounds in the field), handicrafts, mathematics—all at the same time; and Voltaire, who would, in any other case, have been the first to ridicule those articles of popular belief, and to expose the folly of a sovereign learning such things to fit him for reigning, falls headlong into all the common errors on this subject. Peter's quarrels with his clergy, and his subduing their authority, had some hand in producing such errors by captivating Voltaire's esteem; but he adopts them far more implicitly after his intercourse had begun with the Court of Petersburgh.

* Cor. Gén. iv. 113.—"Je ne ferai pas certainement de Valencourt un grand homme; il était excessivement médiocre; mais j'enjoliverai son article pour vous plaire." It appears (ib. 44) that his first publication was a most imperfect sketch, and written when he was without sufficient materials. These afterwards poured in from all quarters, and he extended the next edition a third. But how much matter must have been sent to him of a more than suspicious quality!

no doubt very sincere, and it was not perhaps necessary, in the pursuit of court favour under his successor, to soften the harsher features of his character. Yet there is some partiality to him shown throughout the work. Thus the atrocious butchery and havoc in the Palatinate could not be passed over, and, if mentioned, must be blamed; but the historian censures it as slightly as possible when he says, that at a distance, and in the midst of his pleasures, the king only saw "an exercise of his power and his belligerent rights, while, had he been on the spot, he would only have seen the horrors of the spectacle." (Ch. xvi.)

The best of the Romances are 'Zadig,' one beautiful chapter of which is taken from the more beautiful 'Hermit' of our Parnell; the 'Ingénu;' and, above all, 'Candide.' Some are disposed to place this last at the head of all his works; and even Dr. Johnson, with all his extreme prejudices against a Frenchman, an unbeliever, and a leveller, never spoke of it without unstinted admiration, professing that had he seen it, he should not have written 'Rasselas.'* It is indeed a most extraordinary performance; and while it has such a charm that its repeated perusal never wearies, we are left in doubt whether most to admire the plain sound sense, above all cant, of some parts, or the rich fancy of others; the singular felicity of the design for the purposes it is intended to serve, or the natural yet striking graces of the execution. The lightness of the touch with which all the effects are produced—the constant affluence of the most playful wit—the humour wherever it is wanted, abundant, and never overdone—the truth and accuracy of each blow that falls, always on the head of the right nail—the quickness and yet the ease of the transitions—the lucid clearness

* There was an interval of several months, as my learned friend Mr. Croker has clearly ascertained, between the two works; but Johnson had never seen 'Candide' when he came by a singular coincidence on the very same ground.

of the language, pure, simple, entirely natural—the perfect conciseness of diction as well as brevity of composition, so that there is not a line, or even a word, that seems ever to be superfluous, and a single phrase, sometimes a single word, nay a point, produces the whole effect intended; these are qualities that we shall in vain look for in any other work of the same description, perhaps in any other work of fancy. That there is caricature throughout, no one denies; but the design is to caricature, and the doctrines ridiculed are themselves a gross and intolerable exaggeration. That there occur here and there irreverent expressions is equally true; but that there is anything irreligious in the ridicule of a doctrine which is in itself directly at variance with all religion, at least with all the hopes of a future state, the most valuable portion of every religious system, may most confidently be denied. We have already seen Voltaire's sober and enlightened view of this subject in his moral poems, and those views agree with the opinions of the most pious Christians, as well as the most enlightened philosophers, who, unable to doubt the existence of evil in this world, or to account for it in consistency with the Divine goodness, await with patient resignation the light which will dawn upon them in another state of being, and by which all these difficulties will be explained.*

The residence of Voltaire, first at the Délices, near

* He appears to have disavowed this admirable work even more carefully than any of his far more exceptionable productions. To his most familiar friends we find him exceeding all the fair limits of denial within which authors writing anonymously should confine themselves. To M. Vernes, pastor at Geneva, with whom he was intimate, he writes, "J'ai lu enfin 'Candide;' il faut avoir perdu le sens pour m'attribuer cette coïonnerie: j'ai, Dieu merci! de meilleures occupations." (Cor. Gén. v. 229.) To Thibouville he says, "J'ai lu enfin ce 'Candide' dont vous m'avez parlé; et plus il m'a fait rire, plus je suis fâché qu'on me l'attribue." (ib. 258.) Even to his confidant and tool Theiriot he says, "Dieu me garde d'avoir eu la moindre part à cet ouvrage!" (ib. 258.)

Geneva, and, when the Calvinist metropolis obliged him to part with that place at a heavy loss, at Ferney within the French frontier, was for the remainder of his life far more tranquil and agreeable than during the more passionate and irritable period which preceded. His literary occupation was as incessant as ever; and, beside some of his lesser poems, the greater portion of his philosophical and critical works were written during this latter time.* His relaxation was the society of his friends and the amusements of the stage, a small theatre being formed in the château, and his niece, and occasionally himself, acting in the different pieces represented. Madame Denis had some talents for the stage, but he greatly exaggerated her merit, and even amused Marmontel, who relates the anecdote in his 'Memoirs,' with telling him on one occasion how much she had excelled Clairon. "J'avoue," says he, "j'ai trouvé cela un peu fort." Voltaire himself had very humble pretensions as an actor, and in his letters laughs at himself, with much good humour, for these exhibitions. The Genevese purists were scandalised at the near neighbourhood of private theatricals, but they occasionally formed part of the audience in spite of Rousseau's exhortations against the stage. They also visited Voltaire without scruple at Ferney. He kept a hospitable house, befitting his affluent circumstances and generous disposition; he received strangers

* About twenty-eight of his works, beside some of the romances and some of the minor poems, were written and published after the year 1758; of the 'Dictionary,' eight volumes; of the 'Philosophy' all the six, except half a volume; of the 'Mélanges Littéraires,' more than one; of the 'Mélanges Historiques,' two; 'Dialogues,' two; 'History of the Parliaments of Paris,' one; nearly all the volumes of 'Facéties;' all but half a volume of the three on 'Politics and Legislation,' including his writings on the cases of Calas and Debarre; nearly the whole of the three volumes of 'Commentaries on Dramatic Works.' Beside these volumes there are eight or more thick volumes of his Correspondence; and beside finishing and correcting some of his other historical works, he wrote the 'Peter the Great' and the 'Age of Louis XV.' during the same last twenty years of his life; so that he wrote forty volumes during that period of his old age.

who were properly introduced, and it may well be imagined that the inexhaustible resources of his learning and his wit, as varied as it was original, gave extraordinary delight to his guests. He was fond of assisting persons in distress, but chiefly young persons of ability struggling with difficult circumstances: thus the niece of Corneille, left in a destitute condition, was invited, about the year 1760, to Ferney, where she remained for several years, and received her education. But, above all, he was the protector of the oppressed, whether by political or ecclesiastical tyranny. His fame rests on an imperishable foundation as a great writer—certainly the greatest of a highly polite and cultivated age; but these claims to our respect are mingled with sad regrets at the pernicious tendency of no small portion of his works. As the champion of injured virtue, the avenger of enormous public crimes, he claims a veneration which embalms his memory in the hearts of all good men; and this part of his character untarnished by any stain, enfeebled by no failing, is justly to be set up against the charges to which other passages of his story are exposed, redeeming those passages from the dislike or the contempt which they are calculated to inspire for their author.

During the winter of 1761–62, a scene of mingled judicial bigotry, ignorance, and cruelty was enacted in Languedoc, the account of which reached Ferney, where the unhappy family of its victims sought refuge. A young man, twenty-eight years of age, Marc Antoine Calas, the son of a respectable old Calvinist, was found dead, having, it appears, hanged himself. There arose a suspicion nearly amounting to insanity in the mind of a fanatical magistrate of the name of David, that the young man had been hanged by the father to prevent him from becoming a Catholic. Another son had been already converted, and the father, so far from repudiating, supplied with a handsome allowance. There was a visitor of the family, a youth of nineteen years

old, present at the time when the murder was supposed to have been committed; as were the mother and brothers of the deceased, all of whom must have concurred in the diabolical act. The father, beside being sixty-nine years of age, had for some time been reduced to great weakness by a paralytic complaint. The deceased was one of the most powerful men in the country, and nearly six feet high. He was also of dissolute habits, involved in pecuniary difficulties, and possessing and fond of reading books that defended suicide. Finally, it was certainly known that the notion of his wishing to become a Catholic was a pure fiction, and that he had never given the least intimation of such a desire. In the face of all this, amounting to proof of the magistrate's fancy being an absolute impossibility, he ordered the whole family to be cast into prison together with the father, as accomplices in the supposed murder. The populace immediately took up the subject thus suggested to them by authority, and considered the deceased as a martyr. The brotherhood of the White Penitents (Voltaire says at the desire of the magistrate) celebrated a mass for his soul, exhibiting his figure with a palm-branch in one hand as the emblem of martyrdom, and a pen in the other, the instrument wherewith, as was represented, he intended to have signed his recantation of Calvinism. A report was industriously spread abroad that the Protestants regard the murder of children by their parents as a duty when they are minded to abjure the reformed faith; but that, for the sake of greater certainty, and to prevent the escape of the convert, the sect assembles in a secret place, and elects at stated times a public executioner to perform this office. The court before whom the case was brought, at first was disposed to put the whole family to the torture, never doubting that the murder would be confessed by one or other of them; but they ended by only condemning the father to be broke alive upon the wheel. The

Parliament of Toulouse, by a narrow majority, confirmed this atrocious sentence; and the wretched old man died in torments, declaring his perfect innocence with his latest breath. The rest of the family were acquitted—an absurdity the most glaring, inasmuch as they were all his accomplices of absolute necessity if he was guilty.

Loaded with grief, and suffering under the additional pangs of their blasted reputation, the wretched family came to Geneva, the head-quarters of their sect, and immediately applied to Voltaire. He at once devoted himself to their defence, and to obtaining the reversal of perhaps the most iniquitous sentence that ever a court professing or profaning the name of justice pronounced. He was nobly seconded by the Duc de Choiseul, then Minister. The case was remitted to a Special Court of Judges appointed to investigate the whole matter. The preparation of memorials, the examination of evidence, a long correspondence with the authorities, were not the philosopher's only labours in this good cause: he revised all the pleadings of the advocates, made important additions to them, and infused a spirit into the whole proceedings, the fruit of his genius and worthy of his pious design. In 1765 the decree was reversed; Calas was declared innocent, and his memory restored (*réhabilité*); and the Minister afforded to the family an ample pecuniary compensation, as far as any sum could repair such cruel wrongs.* This took place in the spring of 1766. The Parliament of Languedoc was, unfortunately, not compelled to recognise the justice of the act which reversed its decree, and it had the wretched meanness to refuse obstinately the only reparation it could make —indeed, the only step by which its own honour could be saved.

* 86,000 francs was bestowed by the King, on the representation of the Court which reversed the abominable sentence. (Œuv. de Pol. et Lég. i. 315.)

When we hear considerable persons, as we used to hear Mr. Windham, argue from the example of the French tribunals that judicial places may safely be sold, let the case of Calas not be forgotten. No men who had risen to the Bench by their professional talents ever could have joined the ferocious David in committing this judicial murder. For him a signal and a just retribution was reserved. The reversal of the sentence either stung him with remorse, or, covering him with shame, affected his reason, and he died soon after in a mad-house. The efforts of Voltaire, crowned with success, gained him universal applause. Since the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the Huguenots had never felt any security against persecution. They now felt that they had a champion equally zealous, honest, and powerful. Indeed, the zeal which he displayed knew no rest; his whole soul was in the cause. He was wont to say, that during the three years that the proceedings lasted he never smiled without feeling that he had committed a crime. The country never forgot it. When, during the last days of his life, in the spring of 1778, he was one day on the Pont Royal, and some person asked the name of "that man whom the crowd followed?"—"Ne savez vous pas" (answered a common woman) "que c'est le sauveur de Calas?" It is said that he was more touched with this simple tribute to his fame than with all the adoration the Parisians lavished upon him.*

About the same time with this memorable affair of Calas, there was an attempt made by the same fanatical party in Languedoc to charge a respectable couple, of the name of Sirven, with the murder of their daughter,

* Some unreflecting person has lately been endeavouring to reverse the public judgment in favour of Calas and of Voltaire, by examining the records of the Courts in Languedoc; and has published an assertion, that the original sentence on Calas was right. Was any one silly enough to suppose that these Courts would preserve any evidence of their own delinquency?

a young woman who had been confined in a monastery, under a lettre de cachet, obtained by the priests, and, having suffered from cruel treatment, and made her escape, was found in a well drowned. Sirven and his wife escaped upon hearing of the charge: he was sentenced to death *par contumace;* she died upon the journey, and he took refuge in Geneva. Voltaire exerted himself as before; and though it was necessary that the party should expose himself to the risk of an unjust condemnation by appearing to answer the accusation in the Court of Toulouse, so much were men's minds improved since the former tragedy, that the great efforts of the advocates, acting under Voltaire's instructions and with his help, succeeded in obtaining a complete acquittal.

This happened in the year 1762. The year after another horrid tragedy was acted in the north, although here Voltaire's great exertions failed in obtaining any justice against the overwhelming weight of the Parliament of Paris, which basely countenanced the iniquity of the court below. A crucifix was found to have been insulted in the night, on the bridge of Abbeville. Two young men, D'Etallonde and the Chevalier La Barre, were accused of this offence on mere vague suspicion, by the spite of a tradesman who owed them some grudge. The former made his escape; the latter, a youth of seventeen, and highly connected, ventured to stand his trial. Other charges were coupled with the main accusation, all resolving themselves into alleged irreverent behaviour at taverns, and in other private societies. The court pronounced La Barre guilty, and condemned him to suffer the rack, to have his tongue torn out, and then to be beheaded. This infernal sentence was executed upon the miserable youth. The courage shown by Voltaire in exerting himself for La Barre was the more to be admired, that one of the charges against the Chevalier was the having a work of his own in his possession, and treating

it with peculiar veneration. This proved, however, to be a groundless suggestion. It was infinitely to Frederick's honour, that when Voltaire asked his countenance and protection for the other young gentleman who had fled and been condemned *par contumace*, he gave him a company, promoted him as an engineer, settled a pension upon him, and afterwards made his fortune in the Prussian army.*

It would be gratifying could we assert with truth, that the same love of liberty and justice marked every part of his conduct during the latter years of his illustrious life. One great exception is to be found in the correspondence with Frederick and the Empress Catherine of Russia, at the period of their execrable partition of Poland in 1772. He treats that foul crime not only with no reprobation, but even with flattering approval; and, in one of his letters, he describes the Empress's share in it as "noble and useful, and consistent with strict justice."†

We have examined the history of his two celebrated quarrels, those with Frederick and Maupertuis; and have now contemplated his humane and charitable exertion for the Calas, the Sirvens, and the La Barres: but his other quarrel reflects less honour on him. His behaviour towards Rousseau cannot be said to do much credit either to his temper or his humanity. Rousseau, younger by eighteen years than Voltaire, and dazzled by his brilliant reputation, had paid him a court by no means niggardly, yet not subject to the charge of

* In addition to the other atrocities of this case, was the incompetency of the Abbeville tribunal. Of the three judges, one was connected with the prosecutor; another had quitted the profession and become a dealer in cattle, had a sentence against him, and was afterwards declared incapable of holding any office.

† See his verses about kings dividing their cake (Cor. avec les Souv. ii. 92), and his rejoicing in having lived to see "the great event" (93.) To Catherine he says, she has, by her "parti noble et utile, rendu à chacun ce que chacun croit lui appartenir, en commençant par elle-même." (ib. ii. 618.) Again he says, "Le dernier acte de votre grande tragédie paraît bien beau." (ib. 627.)

flattery. Voltaire had returned his civilities, as was his wont, with good interest. Rousseau, on the Lisbon poem appearing, wrote an answer in a long, eloquent, and ill-reasoned letter to Voltaire, which he never made public, but it came into print by some accident yet unaccounted for. Voltaire had, in a note, half jocose and quite kind, declined the controversy, as he had before declined to discuss the benefits of civilization and learning with the same antagonist. Rousseau had, previously to the letter appearing, written an attack upon the Theatre, and was supposed by Voltaire to have stirred up the people of Geneva against him, partly on that account, and partly because of his infidel opinions. Rousseau now, in 1760, addressed a letter to him full of bitter complaints, laying to his door the moral destruction, as he calls it, of Geneva (meaning by the Ferney theatricals), his own proscription there, and his banishment from his native country, rendered insupportable by the neighbourhood of Ferney (Confessions, Part ii., book x.) To this letter Voltaire very properly returned no answer; he treats it as the effusion of a distempered mind, in all the allusions to it which we find among his letters. But he always asserted, that the charge of injuring the writer of it was so far from being well founded, that he had uniformly supported him among his bigoted countrymen. Be this as it may, we find ever after the most unmeasured and unmerciful abuse of Rousseau as often as he is mentioned; and the dull but malignant poem, 'Guerre civile de Genève,' contains a more fierce and cruel attack upon this poor man than is to be found upon any other person in that or any of Voltaire's satires. It is not to be forgotten that the constant undervaluing of Rousseau's genius can scarcely be ascribed to anything but jealousy, if not of his talents, yet of his success. He can see no merit whatever in any of these writings, except the 'Profession de Foi,' in the 'Emile;' and of that he only speaks as an

exception to their general worthlessness; whereas we know that he felt the greatest jealousy of the courage which it displayed in attacking religion openly, while he had himself never ventured upon any but covert, anonymous assaults, always disavowed as soon as repelled or reprobated. Rousseau's conduct towards Voltaire was a great contrast to this. To the end of his life he avowed the most unrestrained admiration of that great genius; he subscribed to his statue erected at Lyons—an act which Voltaire was silly enough to resent, affecting to think that the Duc de Choiseul, whose name was at the head of the subscription, might not like being in such company. Finally, when 'Irène,' his last composition, was represented a few weeks before his death, Rousseau generously declared, on some one mentioning the decline of genius which it indicated, that it would be equally inhuman and ungrateful in the public to observe such a thing, even if it were unquestionably true.

That the genius of the poet had in some degree suffered by the lapse of so many years, who can doubt? Yet the 'Irène,' finished two months before his death, and the 'Agathocles,' which he had not finished when he died, contain passages of great splendour and beauty; nor was there ever, it may truly be asserted, a poet at the age of eighty-four capable of so signal an exertion. It is, indeed, only one of the many proofs which remain of the inextinguishable activity of his great mind. He added a passage to the introductory chapters of his 'Louis XIV.,' which shows that it was written a few weeks before his decease, for it gives an account of Hook's publication which appeared in 1778.*

After an absence of above seven and twenty years he revisited Paris with his niece, who, at the beginning of 1778, wished to accompany thither a young lady,

* Siècle de Louis XIV. i. p. 25.

recently married to M. Vilette. Voltaire had just finished 'Irène,' and had a desire to see its representation. The reception he met with in every quarter was enthusiastic. He had outlived all his enemies, all his detractors, all his quarrels. The Academy, which had, under the influence of court intrigues, now long forgotten, delayed his admission till his fifty-second year, seemed now anxious to repair its fault, and received him with honours due rather to the great chief, than to a fellow-citizen, in the commonwealth of letters. All that was most eminent in station or most distinguished in talents—all that most shone in society or most ruled at court, seemed to bend before him. The homage of every class and of every rank was tendered to him, and it seemed as if one universal feeling prevailed, the desire of having it hereafter to say—"I saw Voltaire." But, in a peculiar manner, his triumphant return was celebrated at the theatre. Present at the third night of 'Irène,' all eyes were turned from the stage to the poet, whose looks, not those of the actors, were watched from the rising to the falling of the curtain. Then his bust was seen on the stage; it was crowned with chaplets, amidst the shouts and the tears of the audience. He left the house, and hundreds pressed forward to aid his feeble steps as he retired to his carriage. No one was suffered to sustain him above an instant—all must enjoy the honour of having once supported Voltaire's arm. Countless multitudes attended him to his apartments, and as he entered they knelt to kiss his garments. The cries of "*Vive Voltaire!*" "*Vive la Henriade!*" "*Vive Zaire!*" rent the air. The aged poet's heart was moved with tenderness. "On veut" (he feebly cried)—"on veut me faire mourir de plaisir! On m'étouffe de roses!"

Franklin was in Paris on Voltaire's arrival, as envoy from the revolted colonies, and was soon presented to him. Voltaire had long ceased to speak our language, but he for some time made the attempt, and added,

"Je n'ai pû résister au désir de parler un moment la langue de M. Franklin." The philosopher presented his grandson, and asked a blessing: "God and liberty," said Voltaire, "is the only one fitting for Franklin's children." These two great men met again at a public sitting of the Academy, and when they took their places side by side, and shook hands together, a burst of applause involuntarily rose from the whole assembly.

During his short stay at Paris Voltaire showed his unwearied activity of mind, increased, if possible, by the transports with which his fellow-citizens everywhere received him. He planned an antidote to the errors which the admitted probity as well as the rare opportunities of the Duc de St. Simon were calculated to propagate in his 'Memoirs,' still kept secret, but destined soon to see the light. He worked at his 'Agathocles;' he corrected many parts of his historical works; and he prevailed upon the Académie Française to prepare its 'Dictionary' upon the novel plan of following each word in the different senses given it at successive periods, and illustrating each by choice passages from contemporary authors. He proposed that each academician should take a letter, and he began himself strenuously to work upon letter A. These labours, and the excitement of the reception at the theatre, proved too much for his remaining strength, and he was seized with a spitting of blood. A new exertion, made in the hope of obviating certain objections taken at the Academy to his plan of the 'Dictionary,' brought on sleeplessness, and he took opium in too considerable doses. Condorcet says that a servant mistook one of the doses, and that the mistake was the immediate cause of his death, which happened on the 30th of May, 1778. He was in the eighty-fifth year of his age.

There have been preserved, and in his own hand, the few lines he wrote to Lally Tolendal, four days before his death, that he died happy, on hearing the reversal of the iniquitous sentence against his father, in whose

cause he had exerted himself twelve years before with his wonted zeal and perseverance. Some very good verses, addressed ten days before to the Abbé de l'Atteignant, in the same measure in which he had written some verses to Voltaire, attest the extraordinary vigour in which his faculties remained to the last.*

While in his last illness the clergy had come round him; and as all the philosophers of that period appear to have felt particularly anxious that no public stigma should be cast upon them by a refusal of Christian burial, they persuaded him to undergo confession and absolution. He had a few weeks before submitted to this ceremony, and professed to die in the Catholic faith, in which he was born—a ceremony which M. Condorcet may well say gave less edification to the devout than it did scandal to the free-thinkers. The curé (rector) of St. Sulpice had, on this being related, made inquiry, and found the formula too general; he required the Abbé Gauthier, who had performed the office, to insist upon a more detailed profession of faith, else he should withhold the burial certificate. While this dispute was going on, the dying man recovered, and put an end to it. On what proved his real deathbed, the curé came and insisted on a full confession. When the dying man had gone a certain length, he was required to subscribe to the doctrine of our Saviour's divinity. This roused his indignation, and he gave vent to it in a very irreverent exclamation which at once put to flight all the doubts of the pious, and reconciled the infidels to their patriarch. The certificate was refused, and he was buried in a somewhat clandestine, certainly a hasty manner, at the monastery of Scellières, of which his nephew was abbot. The bishop of the diocese (Troyes) hearing of the abbé's intention, dispatched a positive prohibition; but it arrived the day after the ceremony had taken place.

* Cor. Gén. xi. 627, 628.

The notion which some have taken, that Voltaire was ignorant of or at least imperfectly acquainted with the English language, and into which an accomplished though somewhat prejudiced critic has among others been betrayed, is purely fanciful: he had as thorough a knowledge of it as could be acquired by a foreigner; perhaps a greater familiarity and easier use of it than any other ever had. He wrote it with ease, and with perfect correctness, in the earlier part of his life, hardly making any mistakes—certainly none which a little care would not have prevented. I have lately seen a letter of his, thanking an author for the present of his book, probably Sir H. Sloane; and there is but one word, *lectors* for *readers*, wrong; nor is there the very least restraint in the style, which is also quite idiomatic, as when he speaks of his "crazy constitution." *Ills* for *maux*, meaning complaints, has the authority of Shakspeare, if indeed any authority were required to justify this use of the word. The Gallicism or mistake of *lectors* proves that he himself wrote this letter, and sent it without any one revising it. While visiting England, in 1727, he published an essay on the 'Civil Wars of France,' with remarks on the 'Epic Poetry of all Ages,'—a small octavo, or large duodecimo volume, intended to illustrate the 'Henriade,' of which, as has been observed, an edition was published at that time by subscription. The English is perfectly correct, and the diction quite easy and natural. There is a copy in the British Museum, with these words on the title-page, in his own hand—"To Sir Hanslone (Hans Sloane), from his obedient servant, Voltaire." In his latter years he spoke English with great difficulty, and seldom attempted it; but that he retained his familiarity with the language, and could easily write it, we have the clearest evidence in two excellent lines which he wrote when in his eightieth year to Dr. Cradock, who had sent him a copy of his drama, 'Zobeide,' chiefly borrowed from Voltaire's 'Scythes:'

"Thanks to your muse, a foreign copper shines,
Turn'd into gold, and coin'd in sterling lines."

Nor is our admiration of this facility of English diction lessened by the consideration that the idea is in some degree imitated from Roscommon. H. Walpole has indeed with a gross exaggeration said respecting his letter to Lord Lyttelton, that not one word of it is tolerable English; but he may late in life have lost the facility of writing in a language not acquired while a child, as we know that both with Lord Loughborough and Lord Erskine the Scottish accent returned in old age, though they had got entirely rid of it during the middle period of life.

After the details of his life, and the full consideration of his various works, it would be a very superfluous task to attempt summing up the character of Voltaire, either as regards his intellectual or his moral qualities. The judgment to be pronounced on these must depend upon the details of fact and the particular opinions already given, and no general reflections could alter the impression which these must already have produced.

One part only of his composition has had no place, and derived no illustration from the preceding pages—his convivial qualities, or colloquial powers. These are on all hands represented as having been admirable. He was of a humour peculiarly gay and lively; he had no impatience of temper in society; his irritability was reserved for the closet, and his gall flowed only through the pen. Then his vast information on all subjects, and his ready wit, never failing, but never tiring, added to his having none of the fastidious taste which prevents many great men from enjoying the humours of society themselves, while it casts a damp and a shade over the cheerful hours of others—all must have conspired to render his company a treat of the highest order. His odd and unexpected turns gave his wit a zest that probably never belonged to

any other man's. His writings give us some taste of this; and there are anecdotes on record, or at least preserved by tradition, of jokes of which they who read his works at once recognise him as the author. When the Dijon academicians presented him with the place of an honorary member, observing that their academy was a daughter of the Parisian body—"Eh! oui:" said he, "eh! et une bonne fille, je vous en réponds, qui ne fera jamais parler d'elle."—When at some family party the guests were passing the evening in telling stories of robbers, and it came to his turn—"Once upon a time (he began)—Jadis, il y avoit, un fermier-général——ma foi, Messieurs, j'ai oublié le reste."

When St. Ange, who plumed himself on the refined delicacy of his flattery, said, on arriving at Ferney, "To-day I have seen Homer; to-morrow I shall see Sophocles and Euripides, then Tacitus, then Livy:" "Ah! Monsieur," said his ancient host, alarmed at the outline of a long visit, which he seemed fated to see filled up, "Ah, Monsieur! je suis horriblement vieux. Ne pourriez vous pas tâcher les voir tous le même jour?" The sketch probably was left unfinished by this interruption. So when an English traveller who had been to see Haller, heard Voltaire speak loudly in his praise, and expressed admiration of this candour, saying Haller spoke not so well of him: "Hélas!" was the admirable answer, "il se peut bien que nous nous trompons, tous les deux." A graver rebuke was administered by him to an old lady who expressed her horror at finding herself under the same roof with a declared enemy of the Supreme Being, as she was pleased to term Voltaire:—"Sachez, madame, que j'ai dit plus de bien de Dieu dans un seul de mes vers que vous n'en penserez de votre être."

A striking picture of his powers of conversation is given by Goldsmith, who passed an evening in his company about the year 1754. He describes it, after

saying generally that no man whom he had ever seen exceeded him; and Goldsmith had lived with the most famous wits of the world, especially of his own country—with Burke, Windham, Johnson, Beauclerk, Fox. There arose a dispute in the party upon the English taste and literature. Diderot was the first to join battle with Fontenelle, who defeated him easily, the knowledge of the former being very limited on the subject of the controversy. "Voltaire," says Goldsmith, "remained silent and passive for a long while, as if he wished to bear no part in the argument which was going on. At last, about midnight, he began, and spoke for nearly three hours, but in a manner not to be forgotten—his whole frame was animated—what eloquence, mixed with spirit—the finest strokes of raillery—the greatest elegance of language—the utmost sensibility of manner! Never was I so much charmed, nor ever was so absolute a victory as he gained."*

To enter further on any general description, when all the particulars have been gone over, would be absurd. It is, however, fit to remark that the odium which has cast a shadow on a name that must otherwise have shone forth with pure and surpassing lustre, is partly at least owing to the little care taken to conceal his unpopular opinions, which is no sufficient ground of blame. But in part, it is owing to that which is exceedingly blameable, the unsparing bitterness of his invective on all the honest prejudices (as even he must have deemed them) of believers, and the unceasing ribaldry of his attacks on those opinions, which whether he thought them true or not, had at any rate the sanction of ages, the support of established institutions, and the cordial assent of the vast majority of mankind. The last twenty years of his life were devoted to a constant warfare with these sentiments. Had he con-

* Prior's edition of O. Goldsmith's Works, iii. 223.

fined himself to discussion, had he only brought the resources of his universal learning and acute reasoning to bear upon the religious belief of his contemporaries, no one would have had a right to complain, and no rational Christian would ever have complained, if the twenty volumes which he thus wrote had been multiplied twenty fold, or even so as "that all the world could not contain the books which should have been written." But there is a perpetual appeal from the calm reason of the reflecting few to the laugh of the thoughtless many; a substitution often, generally an addition, of sneer, and gibe, and coarse ridicule, to argumentation; a determination to cry down and laugh down the dogmas which, with his learning and his reason, he was also assaulting in lawful combat. And the consequence has been, that although nothing can be more inaccurate than the notion that he never argues, never produces any proofs which make their appeal to the understanding, yet he passes with the bulk of mankind for a profane scoffer, and little more. The belief of D'Alembert was exactly the same with his own; he has left abundance of letters which show that he had as much zeal against religion as his master, and entered with as much delight into all his endless ribaldry at the expense of the faith and the faithful;* but because he never publicly joined in the assault, we find even those who most thoroughly knew his opinions, nay, bishops themselves, concurring in the chant of his

* See especially such letters as that in which he speaks of the 'Dictionnaire Philosophique,' calling it the Dictionnaire de Satan:—"Si j'avais des connaissances à l'imprimerie de Belzebuth, je m'empresserai de m'en procurer un exemplaire; car cette lecture m'a fait un plaisir de tous les diables." He says he has swallowed it, "Gloutonnement, en mettant les morceaux en double;" and adds—"Assurément si l'auteur va dans les états de celui qui a fait imprimer cet ouvrage infernal, il sera au moins son premier ministre: personne ne lui a rendu des services plus importans." (Cor. d'Al. 274.) The flippancy of this work, which threw D'Alembert into such raptures, is nearly equal to its great learning and ability. Thus, vol. vi. p. 274:—"Bon jour, mon ami Job! tu es un des plus grands originaux," &c. &c.

praises, as the most inoffensive, and even moral of men; while Voltaire, who never said worse than D'Alembert freely but privately wrote, raises in their minds the idea of an emanation from the father of all evil. It may be hard to define the bounds which should contain the free discussion of sacred subjects. Those who are the most firmly convinced of religious truth are, generally speaking, the most careless to what extent the liberty of assailing it, in examining its grounds, shall be carried; but without attempting to lay down any such rule, we may safely admit that Voltaire offended, and offended grievously, by the manner in which he devoted himself to crying down the sacred things of his country, whether we regard the interests of society at large, or the interests of the particular system which he desired to establish.

But though it would be exceedingly wrong to pass over this great and prevailing fault without severe reprobation, it would be equally unjust, nay, ungrateful, ever to forget the immense obligations under which Voltaire has laid mankind by his writings, the pleasure derived from his fancy and his wit, the amusement which his singular and original humour bestows, even the copious instruction with which his historical works are pregnant, and the vast improvement in the manner of writing history which we owe to him. Yet great as these services are—among the greatest that can be rendered by a man of letters—they are really of far inferior value to the benefits which have resulted from his long and arduous struggle against oppression, especially against tyranny in the worst form which it can assume, the persecution of opinion, the infraction of the sacred right to exercise the reason upon all subjects, unfettered by prejudice, uncontrolled by authority, whether of great names or of temporal power. That he combated many important truths which he found enveloped in a cloud of errors, and could not patiently sift, so as to separate the right from the wrong,

is undeniably true; that he carried on his conflict, whether with error or with truth, in an offensive manner, and by the use of unlawful weapons, has been freely admitted. But we owe to him the habit of scrutinizing, both in sacred matters and in profane, the merits of whatever is presented for our belief, of examining boldly the foundations of received opinions, of making probability a part of the consideration in all that is related, of calling in plain reason and common sense to assist in our councils when grave matters are under discussion; nor can any one since the days of Luther be named, to whom the spirit of free inquiry, nay, the emancipation of the human mind from spiritual tyranny, owes a more lasting debt of gratitude. No one beyond the pale of the Romish church ever denies his obligation to the great Reformer, whom he thanks and all but reveres for having broken the chains of her spiritual thraldom. All his coarseness, all his low ribaldry, all that makes the reading of his works in many places disgusting, in not a few offensive to common decency,* and even to the decorum proper to the handling of pious topics, all his assaults upon things which should have been sacred from rude touch, as well as his adherence with unrestrained zeal to some of the most erroneous tenets of the Romish faith—all are forgiven, nay, forgotten, in contemplating the man

* See particularly his abominable sermon at Wittenberg, on marriage, actually preached, and of so immoral a tendency, as well as couched in such indelicate language, that it can only be referred to without translation, by Bishop Bossuet and others; also his 'Table-talk,' in those parts where he treats of women, and describes with ribaldry the most filthy his conflicts against the devil. Nothing in Rabelais is more coarse. Indeed these are passages unexampled in any printed book; but the original sermon must be consulted, for no translator would soil his page with them, and accordingly Audin and others give them only by allusion and circumlocution. 'Titzen-Rede,' p. 306 and 464, must itself be resorted to if we would see how the great Reformer wrote and spoke. His allowing the Landgrave of Hesse to marry a second wife while the first was living, and the grounds of the permission, are well known; and the attempt to deny this passage of his life is an entire failure.

of whom we can say "He broke our chains." Unhappily the bad parts of Voltaire's writings are not only placed as it were in a setting by the graces of his style, so that we unwillingly cast them aside, but embalmed for conservation in the spirit of his immortal wit. But if ever the time shall arrive when men, intent solely on graver matters, and bending their whole minds to things of solid importance, shall be careless of such light accomplishments, and the writings which now have so great a relish, more or less openly tasted, shall pass into oblivion, then the impression which this great genius has left will remain; and while his failings are forgotten, and the influence of his faults corrected, the world, wiser and better because he lived, will continue still to celebrate his name.*

* The edition of Voltaire referred to in this 'Life' is that of Baudouin, at Paris, 1828, in 75 volumes.

APPENDIX.

I.

It would be improper to dismiss the subject of Voltaire without adverting to the somewhat ambitious work which Condorcet has written under the somewhat inaccurate title of his 'Life.' This is a defence and panegyric throughout; no admission of blame, or even error, is ever made; and there is a scorn of all details, facts, dates, which takes from the book its whole value as a biographical, while its unremitting partiality deprives it of all merit as a philosophical composition. Considering the importance of the subject, and the resources of the writer for either recording facts or giving a commentary, it may safely be asserted that there is no greater failure than this work, appealed to as it so often is, out of mere deference to the respectable name it bears. Condorcet was a man of science, no doubt, a good mathematician; but he was in other respects of a middling understanding and violent feelings. In the revolution they called him "le mouton enragé," by way of describing his feeble fury. He belonged to the class of literary men in France whose intolerance was fully equal to that of their pious adversaries—those denouncing as superstition all belief, these holding all doubt to be impious. Rather enamoured of Voltaire's irreligion than dazzled with his wit or his fine sense, he makes no distinction between his good and his bad writings in point of moral worth, nor indeed ever seems to admit that in point of merit one is or can be inferior to another. Witness his panegyric of the 'Pucelle,' which, after some passages were erased, he pronounces to be "a work for which the author of 'Mahomet' and 'Louis XIV.' had no longer any reason to blush" (Vie de Voltaire, 100). His credulity on material things is at least equal to his unbelief on spiritual. He gravely relates that hopes were held out from the court of Madame de Pompadour of

a cardinal's hat for Voltaire when he was instructed to translate some psalms, a task which he performed with such admirable address, though in perfect good faith, that they excited a general horror, and were condemned to be burnt. It is none of the least absurd parts of Condorcet's work, that he, being so well versed in physical and mathematical science, passes without any particular observation the writings of Voltaire on physical subjects, when he was so competent to pronounce an opinion upon their merits. But the strangest part of the matter is, that the author of Voltaire's 'Life' should apparently never have read his voluminous and various correspondence, from which alone the real materials for such a work are to be obtained. He might as well have undertaken the 'Life' of Rousseau without reading the 'Confessions.'

The publication in 1820 of Madame de Grafigny's 'Letters,' while residing for six months at Cirey, entitled, not accurately, 'Vie privée de Voltaire et de Madame du Chatelet,' adds some curious particulars to our former knowledge of Madame du Chatelet and of her household, always supposing that we can entirely rely on the testimony of a woman whose own character was very far from respectable, and who professedly acted the very unworthy part of an eaves-dropper for so considerable a time, pleading only as her excuse the extreme penury from which the hospitality that she violated afforded her a shelter. On Voltaire's character it casts no new light whatever, except that it tends to raise our admiration of his talents, if that be possible, and also of his kindly disposition. Of Madame du Chatelet it gives a far less amiable picture.

II.

I HAVE been favoured, by the great kindness of Mr. Stanford, F.R.S., with part of a series of letters which Voltaire wrote to the Duchess Louisa of Saxe Gotha, grandmother of the late Duke, and of which his Serene Highness was graciously pleased to allow him to make a copy. By Mr. Stanford's permission I am enabled to add some of them; and I have selected the six following, which are now

for the first time made public. They will be found very interesting.

No. 1.

MADAME, À Swetzingen, près de Manheim, 1754.

Je m'approche du midy à pas lents en regrettant cette *Turinge* que votre Altesse Sérénissime embelissait à mes yeux, et ou elle faisait naître de si beau jours, qu'il semble que vos bontez aient donné : j'ai trouvé à la cour de Manheim une image de ces bontez, dont j'ai été comblé à Gotha : cela ne sert qu'à redoubler mes regrets ; je les porterai partout. Il faut enfin aller à Plombières suivant les ordres des médecins et des rois, deux espèces très respectables, avec lesquelles on prétend que la vie humaine est quelquefois en danger ; mais je supplie votre Altesse Sérénissime de considérer combien je luy suis fidèle : il n'y a point d'ancien chevalier errant qui ait si constamment tenu sa promesse. J'ai achevé Charles Quint tantôt à Mayence, tantôt à Manheim ; j'ai été jusqu'au Chimiste Rodolphe Second ; j'ai songé de cour en cour, de cabaret en cabaret, que j'avais des ordres de Madame la Duchesse de Gotha ; je voiage avec des livres comme les héroïnes de roman voiageaient avec des diamants et du linge sale ; je trouverai à Strasbourg des secours pour achever ce que mon obéissance à vos ordres a commencé ; mais, Madame, qu'il sera dur de vous obéir de si loin !

Je ne ferai jamais qu'une seule prière à Dieu : je luy diray, Donnez moy la santé pour que je retourne à Gotha. Je me flatte que la Grande Maîtresse des Cœurs me conserve toujours ses bontez ; qu'elle me protège toujours auprès de votre Altesse Sérénissime. Je me mets à vos pieds, Madame, avec quarante Empereurs, préférant assurément la vie heureuse de Gotha à toutes leurs aventures. Je serai attaché le reste de ma vie à votre Altesse Sérénissime, avec le plus profond respect, et une reconnaissance inalterable. Permettez moy, Madame, de présenter les mêmes sentimens à Monseigneur le Duc et à votre auguste famille.

No. 2.

MADAME, À Colmar, 30 Juillet, 1754.

. . . . . .

. . . . Ce que votre Altesse Sérénissime me dit d'une certaine personne* qui se sert du mot de "rappeler" ne me convient guères; ce n'est qu'auprès de vous, Madame, que je peuve jamais être appelé par mon cœur; il est vray que c'est la ce qui m'avait conduit auprès de la personne en question; je luy ay sacrifié mon temps et ma fortune; je luy ay servi de mâitre pendant trois ans; je luy ay donné des leçons de bouche et par écrit tous les jours dans les choses de mon métier. Un Tartare, un Arabe du désert, ne m'auroit pas donné une si cruelle récompense. Ma pauvre nièce, qui est encor malade des atrocites qu'elle a essuiées, est un témoignage bien funeste contre luy. Il est inoui qu'on ait jamais traitté ainsi la fille d'un gentilhomme, et la veuve d'un gentilhomme, d'un officier des armées du Roy de France; et j'ose le dire une femme très respectable par elle-même, et qui a dans l'Europe des amis. Si le Roy de Prusse connaissait la véritable gloire, il aurait réparé l'action infame qu'on a faitte en son nom. Je demande pardonne à votre Altesse Sérénissime de luy parler de cette triste affaire; mais la bonté qu'elle a de s'intéresser au sort de ma nièce me rappelle tout ce qu'elle a soufert. Je m'imagine que votre Altesse Sérénissime est actuellement dans son palais d'Altembourg avec Monseigneur et les princes ses enfans: je me mets à vos pieds et aux leurs.

On m'a envoyé de Berlin une relation moitié vers et moitié prose du voyage de Maupertuis et d'un nommé Cogolin: ce n'est pas un chef-d'œuvre.

Recevez, Madame, mes profonds respects et ma vive reconnaissance. V.

No. 3.

MADAME, Aux Délices, 23 Août, 1758.

L'optimisme et le tout est bien recoivent en Suède de terribles échecs: on se bat sur mer, on se menace sur terre; heureuse encor un fois la terre promise de Gotha,

* Frederick II.

où l'on est tranquille et heureux sous les auspices de votre Altesse Sérénissime. Elle a donc lu les lettres de cette femme singulière, veuve d'un poète burlesque et d'un grand Roy, qui naquit Protestante, et qui contribua à la révocation de l'Edit de Nantes; qui fut dévote, et qui fit l'amour. Je ne sçais, Madame, si vous aurez trouvé beaucoup de lettres intéressantes. A l'égard des mémoires de La Beaumelle, c'est l'ouvrage d'un imposteur insensé, qui a quelque fois de l'esprit, mais qui en a toujours mal-à-propos; ses calomnies viennent de le faire enfermer à la Bastille pour la seconde fois: c'était un chien enragé qu'on ne pouvoit plus laisser dans les rues: c'est une étrange fatalité que ce soit un pareil homme qui ait été cause de ce qu'on appelle mon malheur à la cour de Berlin. Pour moy, Madame, je ne connais d'autre malheur que d'être loin de votre Altesse Sérénissime. On est grand nouvéliste dans le pays que j'habite. On prétend qu'il y a dans une partie de l'Allemagne des orages prêts à crever: heureusement ils sont loin de vos états. Je n'ose, Madame, vous demander si votre Altesse Sérénissime pense qu'il y ait guerre cette année: il ne m'appartient pas de faire des questions, mais je sçais que votre Altesse Sérénissime voit les choses d'un coup d'œil bien juste; son opinion déciderait en plus d'une conjoncture de ce qu'on doit penser; plus d'un particulier est intéressé aux affaires générales. Qu'elle me pardonne de lui en parler, et qu'elle daigne recevoir avec sa bonté ordinaire mon profond respect. V.

[In another letter it is stated that the greater part of La Beaumelle's publication of Madame Maintenon's letters referred to in No. 3 proved to be a fabrication.]

No. 4.

MADAME, Aux Délices.

J'ai également à me plaindre de la guerre et de la nature: l'une et l'autre conspirent à me priver du bonheur de faire ma cour à votre Altesse Sérénissime. La vieillesse, les maladies, et les houzards sont de cruels ennemis: j'ay bien peur, Madame, que ces houzards ne demandent un peu de fourrage à vos états, et qu'ils payent fort mal leur dîner et celuy de leurs chevaux. Du moins, Madame, votre beau

Duché, reste d'un Duché encore plus beau, n'aura rien à reprocher à la cavalerie Française: je crois que depuis Rosbach elle a perdu l'idée de venir prendre respectueusement du foin dans vos quartiers. Il me parait que le Roy de Prusse, qui, attaquant à droit et à gauche autrefois, comme le bélier de la vision de Daniel, est totalement sur la deffensive: pour nous, nous sommes sur l'espectative; et Paris est sur l'indifférence la plus gaie; jamais on ne s'est tant réjoui—jamais on n'a inventé tant de plaisanteries, tant de nouveaux amusements. Je ne sçais rien de si sage que ce peuple de Paris, accusé d'être frivole: quand il a vu les malheurs accumulez sur terre et sur mer, il s'est mis à se réjouir, et a fort bien fait; voyla la vraie philosophie. Je suis un vieillard très indulgent: il faut en plaignant les malheureux applaudir à ceux qui ignorent leurs malheurs.

Je renouvelle mes remerciments très humbles à votre Altesse Sérénissime: sa protection au sujet des paperasses touchant le Czar fait ma consolation. Je me mets à ses pieds avec le plus profond respect: je suis, &c. V.

No. 5.

MADAME, Au Château de Tourney, par Genève, 21 Février, 1760.

La nature nous fait payer bien cher la faveur qu'elle nous fait de changer l'hiver en printemps. Votre Altesse Sérénissime a été malade, et la Princesse sa fille a été attaquée de la petite vérole: ce qui est encore très cruel, c'est qu'on est un mois entier dans la crainte, avant de recevoir une nouvelle consolante. Vous daignez, Madame, me mander du 10 Février que j'ay à trembler pour votre santé et pour celle de la Princesse; mais quand daignerez vous rassurer le cœur qui est le plus sensible à vos bontez, et le plus attaché à votre bien-être? Quand apprendrai-je que la petite vérole a respecté la vie et la beauté d'une Princesse née pour vous ressembler, et que votre Altesse Sérénissime a recouvré cette belle santé que je luy ai connue, cet air de fraicheur et de félicité? Madame, il y faut renoncer jusqu' à la paix. J'apprends, et Dieu veuille qu'on me trompe, qu'on foule encore vos états, et qu'on exige des fournitures pour aller faire ailleurs des malheureux. Il faut avouer les Princes

chrétiens et les peuples de cette partie de l'Europe sont bien à plaindre ; on met en campagne quatre fois plus de trouppes pour disputer une petite province que le Grand Turc n'en a pour conserver ses vastes états. Les causes de vos guerres sont toujours très minces, et les effets abominables : vous êtes le contraire de la nature, chez qui l'effet est toujours proportioné à la cause. On ruine cent villes, on engage cent mille hommes, et qu'en résulte-t-il ?—rien. La guerre de 1741 a laissé les choses comme elles étaient : il en sera de même de celle-cy : on fait, on aime, le mal pour le mal, à l'imitation d'un plus grand Seigneur que les Rois, qui s'appelle le Diable. On dit que nos Suisses sont sages : leur pays est en paix. Oui ! mais ils vont tuer et se faire tuer pour quatre écus par mois, au lieu de cultiver leurs champs et leurs vignes. Le Roy de Prusse vient de m'envoier deux cents vers de sa façon, tandis qu'il se prépare à deux cent mille meurtres ; mais que dire des Jesuittes, Messieurs R. de Matos et Jéronimo Emmanuel, qui ont fait assassiner le Roi de Portugal au nom de la Vierge Marie et de St. Antoine.

Profond respect et inquiétude sur la santé de votre Altesse Sérénissime. V.

Je crois que la Grande Maîtresse des Cœurs n'a guère dormi.

No. 6.

MADAME, À Ferney, 22 Juillet, 1762.

C'en est trop ; votre générosité est trop grande, mais il faut avouer que votre Altesse Sérénissime ne pouvoit mieux placer ses bienfaits que sur cette famille infortunée :* il n'en a presque rien coûté pour l'opprimer, pour luy ravir les aliments, et pour faire expirer la vertueuse mère, presque dans mes bras, et il en coûte de très fortes sommes avant qu'on se soit mis seulement en état de lui faire obtenir une ombre de justice : on fait même mille chicanes au généreux Le Beaumont pour l'empêcher de publier l'excellent mémoire qu'il a composé en faveur de

* The family of Sirven, for whom Voltaire was then exerting himself in every direction, and for whom he appears to have asked the Grand Duchess's charity.

l'innocence. On persécute à la fois par le fer, par la corde, et par les flammes, la religion et la philosophie ; cinq jeunes gens ont été condamnes au bûcher pour n'avoir pas oté leur chapeau en voyant passer une procession à trente pas! Est-il possible, Madame, qu'une nation qui passe pour si gaye et si polie soit en effet si barbare ?

L'Allemagne n'a jamais vu de pareilles horreurs: elle sait conserver sa liberté, et respecter l'humanité. Notre religion est prechée en France par des bourreaux. Que ne puis-je venir achever à vos pieds, le peu de jours qui me restent à vivre, loin d'une si indigne patrie ? C'est moy qui suis le trésorier de ces pauvres *Sirvens:* on peut tout m'envoyer pour eux que votre âme si belle leur destine. Madame, qu'elle me console de toutes les abominations dont je suis témoin! Mon cœur est pénétré de la bonté du votre. Daignez agréer mon admiration, mon attachement, mon respect pour vos Altesses Sérénissimes.

Je n'oublierai jamais la Grande Maîtresse des Cœurs.

V.

III.

THE following singular anecdote has never, it is understood, been made public, and it comes from a respectable quarter entitled to credit. Nothing can more strongly illustrate Voltaire's peculiar humour: the contrast between his habitual reverence for the Deity, and his habit of scoffing at the sacred things of Religion, is here presented in a remarkable manner:—

"Une matinée du mois de Mai, M. de Voltaire fait demander au jeune M. le Comte de Latour s'il veut être de sa promenade (3 heures du matin sonnaient). Etonné de cette fantasie, M. de L. croyait achever un rêve, quand un second message vint confirmer la vérité du premier. Il ne hésite pas à se rendre dans le cabinet du Patriarche, qui, vêtu de son habit de cérémonie, habit et veste mordorés, et culotte d'un petit gris tendre, se disposait à partir. 'Mon cher Comte,' lui dit-il, 'je sors pour voir un peu le lever du soleil ; cette Profession de Foi d'un Vicaire Savoyard m'en a donné envie . . . voyons si Rousseau a dit vrai.'

" Ils partent par le temps le plus noir ; ils s'acheminent ; un guide les éclairait avec sa lanterne, meuble assez singulier pour chercher le soleil ! Enfin, après deux heures d'excursion fatigante, le jour commence à peindre. Voltaire frappe ses mains avec un véritable joie d'enfant. Ils étaient alors dans un creux. Ils grimpent assez péniblement vers les hauteurs : les 81 ans du philosophe pesant sur lui, on n'avançait guère, et la clarté arrivait vite ; déjà quelques teintes vives et rougeâtres se projetait à l'horizon. Voltaire s'accroche au bras du guide, se soutient sur M. de Latour, et les contemplateurs s'arrêtent sur la sommet d'une petite montagne. De là le spectacle était magnifique ! les roches pères du Jura, les sapins verts, se découpant sur le bleu du ciel dans les cimes, ou sur le jaune chaud et apre des terres ; au loin des prairies, des ruisseaux ; les milles accidents de ce suave passage qui précède la Suisse, et l'annonce si bien, et enfin la vue se prolonge encore dans un horizon sans bornes, un immense cercle de feu empourprant tout le ciel. Devant cette sublimité de la nature, Voltaire est saisi de respect : il se découvre, se prosterne, et quand il peut parler ses paroles sont un hymne ! ' Je crois, je crois en Toi !' s'écriat-il avec enthousiasme ; puis décrivant, avec son génie de poète, et la force de son âme, le tableau que reveillait en lui tant d'émotions, au but de chacun des véritables strophes qu'il improvisait, ' Dieu puissant ! je crois !' répétait-il encore. Mais tout-à-coup se relevant, il remit son chapeau, sécoua la poussière de ses genoux, reprit sa figure plissée, et regardant le ciel comme il regardait quelquefois le Marquis de Villette lorsque ce dernier disait une *naïveté*, il ajoute vivement, ' Quand à Monsieur le Fils, et à Madame sa Mère, c'est une autre affaire.' "

ROUSSEAU.

THE life of Rousseau neither requires so full a consideration as that of Voltaire, nor affords the materials for it. Mankind are not divided upon his character and his merits, nor ever were. That he was a person of rare genius within limited, nay, somewhat confined, bounds, of a lively imagination, wholly deficient in judgment, capable of great vices as well as virtues, and of a mind so diseased that it may possibly be doubted if he was accountable for his actions, is the opinion which his contemporaries formed of him during his life, which has ever since prevailed, and which, indeed, was confirmed by his own testimony, produced after his decease, and calculated to show that he would not have dissented from the sentence or even have hesitated to join in pronouncing it. His history and his writings* are of a kind that unavoidably interest us; but the one affords too few events, the other too little variety, to detain us very long in examining either.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was born at Geneva, on the 28th of June, 1712. His father was a watchmaker; his mother the daughter of M. Bertrand, a Protestant minister; and her brother, an engineer, married the sister of old Rousseau, who appears to have been a man of exemplary virtue, of considerable abilities, of some information, and of a very feeling heart. He had gone to Constantinople about seven years after the birth of his eldest and then his only son, but he returned on being apprized by his wife that she was

* The edition of Rousseau referred to in the text is that of Lefèvre, Paris, 1839, in eight large volumes.

beset by the attentions of the French Resident, to whom she had given every possible repulse. This gentleman, M. de la Closure, showed, at a distance of thirty years, some kindness to the son, and was moved to tears in speaking of his mother, who died when she had given him birth, ten months after her husband's return from the East. His grief was excessive; and he used for some years after to take a mournful pleasure in speaking of her, and weeping over her memory with his child. He read with him all her books, which were chiefly novels and romances, and in devouring these they would frequently sit up whole nights. The stock being exhausted, they betook themselves to a more wholesome food; the library of her father having, on his death, come to them, and containing historical and other useful books. An extraordinary enthusiasm for the Greek and Roman characters, and especially the eager perusal of 'Plutarch's Lives,' and the Roman history, was the consequence of this new course of reading. Young Rousseau could not abstain from the subject, and one day alarmed the family at dinner, while he was relating the fable of Scævola, by running to the chafing-dish and holding his hand on it. When he was eight or nine years old, his father had a quarrel with a French officer, and to avoid being cast into prison, left Geneva and settled at Lausanne, where he afterwards married a second wife advanced in years, and had no children by her. His eldest son, seven or eight years older than Jean Jacques, had never been the favourite, though bred to his father's business; he took a dissipated course, left the place, and went into Germany. Little pains were taken to stop or to trace him; he never wrote to any one after his flight, and what became of him is not known. In all probability, he died before his brother attracted much notice, else he probably would have discovered himself.

Beside the love of modern romances and of ancient

history, accident gave him a fondness for music, which, with the other passion, accompanied him through life. His aunt, who took care of him, sang a great number of simple airs, chiefly popular ones, with a sweet small voice, which, aided by his attachment to her, made a deep impression upon him, and formed his taste in song as well as imbued him with a sensibility to its charms. After his father's departure for Lausanne, he was left to the care of his uncle Bertrand, who sent him for two years to Boissy, near Geneva, where he remained under the tuition of M. Lambercier, a pastor, and appears to have learnt a little Latin; but when the Abbé Gouvon, in whose service he afterwards was, at Turin, treated him rather as a secretary than a footman, and read Latin with him, he was found to be very ill grounded, and wholly unable to construe Virgil. He acknowledges, indeed, that he never was tolerably acquainted with the language, though he repeatedly attempted to gain it. His statement to this effect, twelve years after he had translated the first book of Tacitus's 'History,' and translated it exceedingly well, in most passages correctly, in some with great felicity, is one of the exaggerations in which he indulges both of his merits and his defects. But he learnt whatever he knew comparatively late. Nothing could possibly be worse than the education of a man who made it a principle through life to cry down learning, not because he never possessed it, but because he fancied it was hurtful to the character and inconsistent with sound wisdom and true virtue.

After quitting the school at Boissy, he was apprenticed to an engraver, who seems to have treated him harshly. But his conduct was already bad. He had a habit of lying on all occasions, whether moved by fear to conceal some misconduct, or incited by some appetite he wished to gratify, or actuated by some other equally sordid motive. A strong disposition to thieving was likewise among his propensities, and this

continued to abide by him long after he grew up, and even when he lived in society he never could entirely shake it off. His temperament, too, was vehement, and his timidity and shyness equally strong. The indulgences into which he was thus seduced, he has himself described; but to embellish such subjects, or even to veil them so as to hide their disgusting aspect, would require the magic of that diction in which he has clothed his own story, and of which he never seems to have been a master in any of his other writings. After serving through half his apprenticeship, he was surprised one Sunday evening in an excursion with his companions, out of the town, by the shutting of the gates; and there wanted no more to make him elope. He went to the parsonage of a Savoyard curé (rector) at Carouges, two leagues from Geneva, who received him hospitably in the hopes of converting him, and gave him letters of introduction* to Madame de Warens, a Swiss lady, who having left her husband, had become a Catholic, and lived on a pension from the devout King of Sardinia. She received him kindly, and sent him to Turin, where he was entertained at the seminary of Catechists, established for converting heretics. In this religious establishment he found manners of the most dissolute and even abominable kind; he was feebly reasoned with by the brethren on the errors of his belief; he does not seem in reality to have been convinced; but a provision in the Church had been placed before his eyes as the probable reward of his apostacy, and he embraced publicly the Catholic religion. It was, however, soon discovered by the officers of the Inquisition that he was not sufficiently orthodox in his faith; for he would not avow his belief that his mother had been numbered among the damned. He was, therefore, turned out of the seminary, with a present of twenty francs from

* The common accounts say that the Bishop of Annecy gave him this introduction. It was M. de Pontverre, Romish curé, in Savoy.

the sum collected at the exhibition of his abjuration.

After living obscurely in Turin in a lodging-house for common people at half a sous a night, he now entered as a footman the service of the Countess de Vercellis, and wore livery with the rest of the servants. In the course of a few months this lady died, and the servants were of course dismissed. It was found that a ribbon had been stolen; all were interrogated, and Rousseau, in whose possession it was found, and who was in fact the thief, had the wickedness to charge it upon an innocent girl; he persisted in averring that she had stolen it to give him, there having been some little love-making between them. The ruin of this poor girl was the consequence, and he describes the bitter agonies of remorse which he ever after endured in reflecting upon the crime thus committed. He endeavours to explain it in a refined, absurd, and false manner, by saying that his love for Marian caused it all, because he had stolen it to give her, and this put it into his head to think of accusing her of the same intention. But the truth is, that his cowardice, the parent of lies, caused it all. He never would have dared charge a man with the offence. He thought he could escape exposure and perhaps punishment (though he affects to say he dreaded not that) by laying the blame on an innocent young girl who had shown a liking for him which he returned. He also tries to represent himself as only a child then,* and, writing in 1766 or 1767, speaks of forty years having elapsed. But this is not true. He came to Annecy in 1728, sixteen years old, having left Geneva in July or August, and after several months' residence in Turin and the seminary, and three in the Countess's house, he must have been seventeen when she died, instead of fourteen or fifteen, which his calculation of forty years would

* "La faute d'un enfant."—(Conf. part i. liv. 2.)

make him. He expressly says that he had attained the age of sixteen before he ran away from his master, and he was born on the 28th of June. Indeed, if he remained in his next place less than a year, as he was uncertain when he left it, he must have been eighteen when he committed the offence. Nothing therefore like an excuse, or extenuation from his youth, can be urged on this head.

He was now to prove himself as foolish as he had been found wicked. Received as footman in the great family of Solar, an accident showed him to be superior in reading to the other servants, and one of the house, the Abbé de Gouvon, a man of great accomplishments and of a kindly disposition, made him a sort of secretary, taking much pains also with his education; so that, though he could not master Latin, he became a good Italian scholar. Suddenly the fancy seized him of quarrelling with the good people, and returning on foot to Geneva, with a good-for-nothing young rake from that town, named Bacler, whose acquaintance he had made, and whose low buffoonery he could not refrain from relishing, and even envying, as he uniformly did whatever qualities he observed to attract the admiration of the multitude. He showed the utmost insolence and ingratitude to the Solars, and was all but kicked out of their palace, where he had been cherished as a child of the family, and had been offered the sure means of making his fortune. A plaything, which in his extreme ignorance he calls *fontaine d'heron*, but which is well known as the fountain of Hiero (fontaine d'Hiéron), had been given him by his patron. His childish delight in this bauble was unbounded, and he expected by showing it off on the road to make his way for nothing, a journey of ninety leagues. With this ridiculous project he set out, and with his warm attachment for his new acquaintance; but as he came near Annecy, and once more hoped to be received into Madame de Warens' house, he felt he could not take

Bacler with him, and so he began to affect a great coldness, that he might shake him off. This he soon contrived to do, and he was kindly taken into her hospitable family, where he became domesticated.

By the account of her, which exposes all her failings with great minuteness, as a reward for her undeviating kindness towards him, Madame de Warens appears to have been a woman of some accomplishments, of considerable personal charms, of attractive manners, of a most kind and charitable disposition, and of very loose principles. This latter particular he endeavours to gloss over by insisting on her peculiar notions of what was fit and allowable. One of her peculiarities was to make herself uniformly the mistress of all her men servants, beside having occasionally deviations into a superior rank of life. To be sure, he maintains that she only adopted this course as the means of attaching those domestics the more to her service; and he holds it quite clear that she neither sought nor found any gratification whatever in this odd kind of family intercourse. Nevertheless he records that his own successor was a tall, ignorant, ill-bred young man of the lowest rank, a hairdresser's apprentice, who domineered over the household, maltreated her shamefully, and brought her to ruin by his extravagance. Her constant and most delicate kindness to Rousseau himself was repaid by much ingratitude, of which the worst part is his committing to paper every detail of his connexion with her. He desired, indeed, that the book should not be published before 1800, and it was given to the world by a breach of trust in 1788. But the lady's family were still alive, had it been withheld the full period prescribed; and her memory was something, or should have been something, in the estimation of a pure sentimentalist, of one who was preparing his own history for the very purpose of gratifying a perverted, unnatural love of posthumous distinction by publishing his weakness and his shame to the scorn of future

ages. He could hardly conceive that any other person than himself had a similar propensity for self-slander. But even he himself would not easily have borne to be slandered by any pen but his own.

Madame de Warens endeavoured to procure for him orders in the church, and sent him with a pension given by the Bishop of Annecy to the seminary, where after some months it was found impossible to make him learn Latin enough for a priest. She then made a M. le Maître, the director of the cathedral music, take him as a pupil and helper. He passed near a year with him, and was treated with the utmost kindness. A profligate, unprincipled young man from Provence, called Venture de Villeneuve, came to Annecy, and from his cleverness, his skill in music, and his excessive impudence, made some sensation in the society of that place. He soon captivated Rousseau for that reason, and to save him from so ruinous an association, as well as to assist Le Maître, who had quarrelled with the chapter, he was desired to accompany him to Lyons. Thither he went, and was still most kindly treated by Le Maître, whose only fault seems to have been his misfortunes, and his being subject to epileptic fits. Rousseau took the opportunity one day, when he fell down in the street, of leaving him to his fate, and escaping in the crowd. Such was his return for the favours received from a kind master. He stole back to Annecy, and found Madame de Warens had left the place on a secret expedition, which proved to be a residence of some time at Paris.

He now wandered about Switzerland, and at one time he settled in Lausanne as a music master. He must needs call himself Vaussure de Villeneuve,* in imitation of the creature he was last taken with; and as it should seem, in a fit of insanity, being wholly incapable of composing, he wrote a concerto which

* Vaussure was a kind of anagram of Rousseau.

was given before a large company at a law professor's house, he himself directing the orchestra. The hideous discords and absolutely incoherent nonsense of the piece created, of course, unbounded and universal ridicule. His scholars soon dropped off; indeed he was fain now to confess himself an impostor, and to own that he had undertaken to teach what he was himself profoundly ignorant of. He began, however, to learn music, and had made some progress when another impostor like himself came to Lausanne, and induced him to go as his secretary and interpreter. This was a man pretending to be an Archimandrite of the Greek church, come to beg aid for repairing the holy sepulchre. He accompanied this knave, and on one occasion made a speech for him to the senate of Bern, who bestowed a considerable sum on the unworthy pair. The French ambassador, who had been in the East, discovered the trick, and Rousseau was employed by him on a mission to Paris; from whence he returned, and passing through Chambery, found Madame de Warens, or Maman as he always called her, established there.

Received again kindly, again he committed his ordinary follies. Madame de Warens obtained for him a comfortable place in a public office (the Cadastre). He kept it two years, and then resigned in order to be a music-master. His skill was fortunately become considerable, and he had a number of scholars. His patroness now promoted him to the rank of lover, but without discarding the servant Claude Anet, who also took care of her botanical as well as her amorous concerns; he was a man of considerable merit and great conduct, and became a kind of governor to Rousseau, who more than any child of six years old stood in need of a master. He was succeeded by a young hairdresser's apprentice, as Rousseau found on his return from a few months passed at Montpelier for his health; the young man supplanted both Claude Anet and Jean Jacques, and continued with this kind-hearted but im-

prudent woman until, ruined by his extravagance and her own projects, she died in a state of wretchedness over which Rousseau has drawn a veil. He saw her, after an absence of fifteen years, in 1754, at Chailly; and she came to see him for the last time near Geneva soon after. He had helped her with such sums as he could spare. She now, in receiving a small pittance, showed her constitutional tenderness of heart and that generosity of disposition which no penury could eradicate; she took off her finger a ring, her only remaining trinket, and pressed it upon the woman through whom the money had been sent. Rousseau charges himself with black ingratitude for not having gone with her and saved her from wretchedness; he could not quit a new attachment which he had formed, and he declares that the reflection on his conduct had haunted him with remorse greater than any other passage of his life could inflict.

But we have anticipated in the narrative. From Chambery he removed to Lyons, where his kind protectress obtained for him an employment as preceptor in M. Mabillon's family. Soon he, as usual, left this place, returned to Chambery, found he could no longer be comfortable in Madame de Warens' house, and set out to seek his fortune in Paris with a 'Discourse on a new Theory of Music,' or rather Musical Notation, which he had written. It had some success at the Academy, where it was read; he became introduced to many persons of note; he accepted the place of secretary to Count de Montaigue, ambassador at Venice, and was on his arrival, as he represents, made secretary of the embassy. Here his conduct was, for the first time in his life, prudent, and he reaped the fruits of the change in the respectability which he enjoyed. He remained performing with satisfaction all the duties of his station, which the utter incapacity of the ambassador made heavier than they otherwise would have been; and after a variety of the meanest attempts on his

Excellency's part to share his perquisites, and repeated acts of maltreatment, at last amounting to the insolence and fury of a madman, this ambassador compelled him to resign. The madness had, however, some method, for the salary was withheld, and in lieu of it the most absurd charges were brought against him. The senate, the council, all the French inhabitants, and all the diplomatists took his part, and he returned to Paris, where he never could get even an answer to his just complaints, being told that a foreigner like him, could not be regarded when charging a French functionary with injustice; for the government very consistently forgot that if foreigners are to be employed in the public service, their not being natives affords no defence whatever to those who maltreat them, and obstruct them in the performance of their official duties.

On his return to Paris he went to live at an inferior hotel, or rather lodging-house, near the Luxembourg, and there dining at the table with the family, he became acquainted with a female servant, a girl from Orleans, where her father had held a place in the mint and her mother had been a shopkeeper, but both were reduced to distress. Their name was Le Vasseur, and the girl's Theresa. She was about twenty-three, of modest demeanour, and so much without education that even after living with him for many years she never could read the figures on the dial-plate of a clock, or tell in what order the months succeeded each other.* He became attached to her; she cohabited with him, and bore him five children, all of which he sent one after the other to the Foundling Hospital, regardless of the poor mother's tears; and after twenty-five years of this intercourse he married her. The mother, a vulgar and affected woman, lived with them; and the father, whom she could not endure, but of whom Theresa was very

* Conf. part ii. liv. 7.

fond, was, on pretext of economy, sent at the age of eighty to the workhouse, where the disgrace of this treatment immediately broke his heart.

After the battle of Fontenoy, in 1745, the Court gave several theatrical entertainments, and Voltaire contributed the 'Princesse de Navarre,' of which the famous Rameau had composed the music; it was now changed into the 'Fête de Ramire,' and Rousseau being employed to complete the adaptation, which required considerable alteration both of words and airs, Voltaire was extremely pleased with his work and with his flattering letter, respecting it. Rousseau composed his own opera of 'Les Muses Galantes' the same year; but after one or two rehearsals, apprehensive of its fate, he withdrew it. The death of his father enabled him to obtain a small sum which belonged to his mother, and which the father had enjoyed for his life. A small portion, which he sent to Chambery, was at once devoured by the knaves who surrounded Madame de Warens, and lived by pillaging her.

The kindness of his steady friend M. Francueil, Receiver-General of Finance, placed him in the office of his cashier (*caissier*), one of great trust, which he dreaded, and of considerable emolument, which, because he was starving and complained of being forced to send his children to the Hospital, he altogether contemned. He resigned it in a few weeks, on the ground that its duties were irksome, and prevented him from fully enjoying himself as he liked, at a time when he believed he had only a few months to live. Self-indulgence appears to have been erected by him into a kind of principle, or rule of conduct. He therefore betook himself to copying music, which he did very carelessly, and very ill.

In 1749 he wrote his 'Essay on the Mischiefs of Science,' the subject proposed by the Academy of Dijon, as if on purpose to frustrate Voltaire's remark already mentioned in his 'Life;' for assuredly it was

a slip in a scientific body to make it a question whether science corrupted or improved the morals of mankind. Next year it obtained the prize. He justly thought very meanly of its arrangement and reasoning, nor did he himself think highly of its composition; yet partly by the brilliancy and power of the declamation, and partly by the boldness of the paradoxes, it attracted the greatest notice, both making converts and raising adversaries against its doctrines. He has described his manner of writing it: he lay in bed with his eyes closed, revolving and finishing his periods, which he always did very slowly and with much difficulty. He slept little, and when he rose in the morning the act of dressing would drive the greater part of what he had composed out of his head. He therefore used to make Theresa's mother come and write under his dictation. The success of his 'Essay' was followed by one more brilliant still. He composed the little opera of the 'Devin du Village' in about six weeks, and it was performed with prodigious success before the King, in his private theatre at Fontainebleau, in 1751. A message was sent next morning to desire his attendance, and it was confidently believed about Court that a pension was to have been granted him; but he was far too much alarmed, and had far too little command of himself, or power of crossing his inclinations, to undergo this scene, and he very indecorously as well as very foolishly ran away to Paris early in the morning. From the Court, however, and the musical engravers, he received between two and three hundred louis, as much as the 'Emile' afterwards brought him, for the fruit of twenty years' labour. The piece deserved its success. Nothing can be more light and gay than both the simple plan, the pretty songs, and the lively, graceful airs. It seems to have all the excellence that a performance of this inferior class can well attain. Next year his 'Narcissus,' a drama, was given at the

'Français;' and though borne for two nights, he was himself so tired of it, and so convinced of its failure, that he could not remain to the end of the performance, but came out, ran to a coffee-house, and announced its certain fate, avowing himself at the same time to be the author, a circumstance which had been carefully concealed. In 1753-4 he wrote a second 'Essay on the Inequality of Human Conditions,' also for the Dijon Academy. It had the faults of the first, with more of paradox, and also better composition; but its want of novelty, and its inferior eloquence, prevented it from succeeding.

In the summer of 1754 he was, with Theresa, taken by a friend, M. Gauffecourt, a tour to Geneva, where he remained some months. He went by Chambery, to see Madame de Warens, and he was received with great distinction by all the families whom he had known; but as he approached Geneva he felt the annoyance to which he was subjected by having lost his civic rights, in consequence of his quitting the Protestant Church. He soon resolved to remove this only obstacle which stood in the way of his regaining them; and abjuring Romanism with as much reflection and as much disinterestedness as he had formerly abjured Calvinism, he was once more a Protestant, and became a citizen of Geneva. Among the reasons which chiefly influenced him in not retiring thither for the rest of his life was the near neighbourhood of Voltaire, whom he regarded as destroying the place by corrupting its inhabitants.* This was in 1754; while to all outward appearance he was bowing to the idol of the day, and expressing his entire admiration of his genius.

On the establishment of the 'Encyclopédie,' D'Alembert and Diderot, with whom he was acquainted, engaged him to write some articles; and this increased

* Conf. part ii. liv. 8.

his intimacy with Diderot, whose habits were loose, as well as introduced him to Diderot's friend Grimm, a man of letters, in the service of the Duke of Saxe Gotha, and employed by him for many years as a kind of literary and philosophical Resident at Paris. The letters which he wrote in that capacity, his despatches, as it were, have been since published, and are well known. When he came to Paris, being a man of wit as well as letters, he was successful in society, and became dissipated and even profligate in his manners; but he does not appear either to have indulged in any vulgar excesses, or to have offended against the conventional laws of honour which bind the polite world. Rousseau always represents himself as his introducer into the Parisian circles, and as having been supplanted there by his superior address and habits of the world. Among others he had presented him to the family of M. d'Epinay, Fermier-Général, who kept a very hospitable house, where the Encyclopédists were familiar, as they were still more at the Baron d'Holbach's. Grimm became the professed lover of Madame d'Epinay, whose sister-in-law, Madame d'Houdetot, made a still deeper impression on the heart of Rousseau; but her avowed lover was his friend St. Lambert. The Epinays had a country house, Chenettes, in the fine valley of Montmorency; and Rousseau, when visiting there, was greatly taken with the retirement of a cottage and garden called the Hermitage, in its neighbourhood, and likewise belonging to the family. Hither he transferred his residence, in the spring of 1756, and it was his home for the next six years of his life.* Theresa's mother came with him as well as herself, and nothing can be more disgusting than the details of her mean, sordid, double-

* It is only another instance of his inattention to dates that he totally omits the several years passed at Neufchâtel, when he speaks of Montmorency as his constant residence, and represents it as such after his visit to England in 1766.

dealing conduct, to obtain money and other things from him, through the agency of her daughter. But she was of some use in the management of his house, for which her daughter was as unfit as himself.

At the Hermitage, for the first year or two of his residence, he seems to have suffered for want of the society which he had quitted, though this is the last thing he will confess. He admits that his imagination was excited by the recollection of past scenes of enjoyment in a more sensual kind; and the void left by these gratifications, now past, or only existing in his memory, he filled up with creations of his fancy, embodying beings of a lovely and excellent nature, and placing them in situations of lively interest, which, if his own experience and recollections failed to suggest, it cost his imagination, sometimes sentimental, sometimes prurient, nothing to invent. This was the origin of the 'Nouvelle Héloïse,' of all his works the most renowned, and of all, except his posthumous 'Memoirs,' the best, though certainly very greatly overrated both by the public opinion and by his own. He describes the delight he had in composing it as approaching to an actual enjoyment, though it only consisted in the pleasures of an indulged fancy. He wandered all day in the forest of Montmorency; he had his pencil and note-book with him; Theresa walked calmly by. In the afternoon returning home, he wrote what had occurred on the finest paper, sanded with gold and blue dust, bound with bright-coloured ribbons; and he read at night the produce of the day to the mother, who entered not into it with any comprehension, much less tasted it with any relish, but said, "Monsieur, cela est bien beau;" and to the daughter, who entered not into it at all, but sighed and sobbed when she saw him appear to be moved.

To deny the great merit of this work would be absurd; the degree in which it has been overrated, owing chiefly to its immorality, and in part also to its

vices of taste, not unnaturally leads to its depreciation when the critic soberly and calmly exercises his stern and ungrateful office. But the conception of the piece is, for its simplicity and nature, happy, with the exception which may be taken especially to the unnatural situations of the lovers on meeting after Julie's marriage, to the extravagant as well as dull deathbed scene, and to the episode, the adventures of the English Lord. The descriptions of natural scenery are admirable—far superior to the moral painting; for Rousseau's taste in landscape was excellent, while with his moral taste, his perverted sentiments, so wide from truth and nature, always interfered. The interest of the story is quite well sustained, and the turns in it are well represented by the successive letters. The passions are vividly painted, and as by one who had felt their force, though they are not touched with a delicate pencil. The feelings are ill rendered, partly because they are mixed with the perverted sentiments of the ill-regulated, and even diseased mind, in which they are hatched into life, partly because they are given in the diction of rhetoric, and not of nature. The love which he plumes himself on exhibiting beyond all his predecessors, nay, as if he first had portrayed, and almost alone had felt it, is a mixture of the sensual and the declamatory, with something of the grossness of the one, much of the other's exaggeration. As this is the main object of the book, therefore, the book must be allowed to be a failure. It charmed many; it enchanted both the bishops Warburton and Hurd, as we see in their published correspondence; it still holds a high place among the works which prudent mothers withhold from their daughters, and which many daughters contrive to enjoy in secret; it makes a deep impression on hearts as yet little acquainted with real passion, and heads inexperienced in the social relations; it assuredly has no great charms either for the experienced or the wise, and is alike condemned

by a severe taste in composition and a strict judgment in morals.

It would be endless to support these remarks by examples; but let us only take, as the fairest test by which to judge the 'Nouvelle Héloïse,' its author's own favourite piece, the 'Elysée' and the 'Voyage on the Lake,' at the end of Part iv. They are Letters xi. and xvii. of that part; and he denounces a woe upon whosoever can read them without feeling his heart melt in tenderness.*

Now the greater part of the first (Letter xi.) is mere description of place; it is landscape painting, not history painting; and, with the exception of an extremely unnatural reprimand, given by M. de Wolmar to St. Preux, for speaking of the shrubbery where he and Julie used to ramble, and into which since her marriage she never went, there is really not one touch of sentiment in the whole: unless, indeed, it can be reckoned such, that on revisiting the Elysée next morning, when he expected to be melted with seeing the walks she had made and used, the flowers she had planted, &c., he recollects the terrible reprimand of the evening before, and no longer can think of any thing except the happiness of a future state. All this is well written, but it is mere rhetoric; the sentiments are cold, they are unnatural; the reprimand of yesterday never would have stifled the passion of to-day. The last effect that this letter, filled with admirable description of a garden and an aviary, could ever produce, is assuredly that of melting the heart in tenderness; and as far as this first letter goes, the woe denounced in the 'Confessions' must attach on all who read it.

The other (Letter xvii.) is of a much more ambitious

* "Quiconque, en lisant ces deux lettres, ne sent pas amollir, et se fondre son cœur dans l'attendrissement qui me les dictât, doit fermer le livre; il n'est pas fait pour juger les choses de sentiment."—(Conf. part ii. liv. 9.)

character; but, with one single exception, it is liable to the remark to which every part of the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' justly gives rise—that it is rhetoric, not eloquence; it is declamation, not true expression of sentiment. The most laboured passage, beyond all doubt, is the speech which St. Preux addresses to Julie on taking her to the grove and the rocks where he had passed his time when separated from her, and when only thinking of her and writing to her; it is a very long speech, full of set phrases, and describing the icicles on rocks, and snow festoons on trees, and the cold only made bearable by the fire in his heart; touching also on ornithology, as well as meteorology: "le vorace épervier; le corbeau funébre; l'aigle terrible des Alpes" (a phrase, by the way, which no one living among the Alps would ever use); and then ending in a rant of "Fille trop constamment aimée! Oh toi pour qui j'étais né!" &c. She interrupts him with "Allons nous en; l'air de ce lieu n'est pas bon pour moi." Now this is certainly better than the speech, but it is as certainly not pathetic. What follows in the boat is much finer; and is both well conceived, excepting at first, and well executed. He feels his situation so bitterly, that he is tempted for a moment to plunge into the water, dragging her after him; but he rushes away from her side, and weeps violently in the prow. All this is nothing; and indeed the violence of the scene is revolting; but we are recompensed by what follows and closes it. He comes and sits down again by her;—"Elle tenait son mouchoir; je le sentis fort mouillé. Ah! lui dis-je tout bas, je vois que nos cœurs n'ont jamais cessé de s'entendre!" She admits it in a faltering voice, and desires their hearts may never more so commune. They then speak calmly, and he afterwards observes, on landing and coming to the light, that she had been weeping—her eyes were red and inflamed. This is finely done; but with two great faults, the worst which such paint-

ing can have—a piece of wit and an overdone and a needless description. An epigram, almost a pleasantry, is introduced, when he says—and it is the working up of the whole—that their hearts had plainly never ceased to hear or to understand each other; and she answers with a repartee. Instead of stopping at "Il est vrai," or saying nothing, being unable to speak, which would have been better, she goes on, "Mais que ce soit la dernière fois." Even there she might have ended, giving the moral rebuke; but she goes on, "Mais que ce soit la derniére fois qu'ils auront parlé sur ce ton." Then what reason was there for his "J'aperçus à la lumière, qu'elle avait les yeux rouges et fort gonflés, et elle ne dut pas trouver les miens en meilleur état," after the wet handkerchief and faltering voice in the boat, and his own agony in the prow? Such scenes as these require the very greatest care and the most rigid abstinence in the moral artist. Particulars, details, circumstances, must be given, and given when the moral excitement is at its pitch; but the selection is of infinite moment, and there must be no superfluity, no ornament, nothing flowery, nothing, no, absolutely nothing, introduced of an opposite, an inconsistent character. The superfluity surfeits, and sickens, and weakens all effect; the foreign substance inserted causes, as it were, a fermentation to cast the intruder forth.

The less delicate and more vehement portions of the work are certainly very inferior, faulty as even the best parts are. Nothing can be less refined, nothing, indeed, more vulgar, than a lover writing to his mistress at all about his transports on obtaining possession of her. But St. Preux begins, "from the first kiss of love," to hold up her weakness in her own face, and that happens no later in the piece than the fourteenth letter. He holds her conduct up, too, in coarse terms, by way of making the offence less outrageous: "Je suis ivre—mes sens sont troublés par

ce baiser mortel."—"Un doux frémissement."—"Ta bouche de roses—la bouche de Julie—se poser sur la mienne, et mon corps serré dans tes bras."* This may not possibly be the only instance of an innocent girl suffering such a liberty for the first time in her life without resistance, nay, meeting her lover more than half-way; but assuredly it is the only instance of his telling her in plain terms what a forward, abandoned wanton she proved. After this, we are well prepared for a letter, in which she says that all difficulties only give her more spirit and boldness, and that if his courage is equal to her own, he may come in the night, when she will "acquitter ses promesses, et payer d'une seule fois toutes les dettes de l'amour." She then exclaims, "Non, mon doux ami! non! nous ne quitterons pas cette courte vie sans avoir un instant goûté du bonheur;" and to leave no doubt of the kind of happiness she had in her eye, she adds, "Viens avouer, même au sein des plaisirs, que c'est du sein des cœurs qu'ils prirent leur plus grand charme;" of which very bold avowal the chasteness of the diction is on a par with the purity of the morals: for "âme de mon cœur" and "vie de ma vie" are, especially the former, expressions of a moderate correctness. Then follow the two very celebrated letters in consequence of the lady's invitation being accepted. One is written in the ante-room of Julie's bed-chamber, and is of an incomparable absurdity in the design, for which no felicity in the execution could ever compensate. But is the execution less bad than the conception in such lines as these?—"O désirs! O crainte! O palpitations cruelles!—On ouvre! on entre!—C'est elle, c'est elle! Mon faible cœur, tu succombes!—Ah! cherchez des forces pour supporter la félicité qui t'accable."† Of the other letter the following day, absolutely insulting to the poor girl, little needs be said. The scheme of

* Part I. let. xix.: Œuv. ii. 5.
† Part I. let. liv.: Œuv. ii. 127.

writing it is revolting enough; but less so, perhaps, than the language its execution is couched in. He actually speaks of "ces baisers qu'une voluptueuse langueur nous faisaient lentement savourer, et ces gémissemens si tendres durant lesquels tu pressais sur ton cœur, ce cœur fait pour s'unir à lui."* He calls her "divine Julie." It certainly was another epithet originally; I remember to have first read it "inconceivable Julie," and to have thought it the best word in the whole book.

There is no concealing the truth that a volume of love-letters must naturally be tiresome to the very verge of not being readable. Their interest to the parties is only exceeded by their indifference in all other eyes. Hence the 'Nouvelle Héloïse,' which professes chiefly to consist of this kind of material in its most interesting portions, must have been dull, had there been no digressions to relieve it. The marriage of Julie, and the Parisian sojourn of St. Preux, his return to La Meillerie, and Julie's death, afford those varieties, and enable the book to proceed through its very considerable length.

At l'Ermitage, he very soon fell in love with Madame d'Houdetot, M. d'Épinay's sister, and he declares that this was the only love he ever felt in his life. How often the same thing had been avowed to others by the man of pure heart, who deemed sincerity as above all other virtues, who could excuse all vices save the want of perfect simplicity and honesty, we have no means of judging. That he had before been on such terms with some seven or eight women as must have led to similar declarations of attachment, unless he avowed that he treated them as brutes, as mere instruments of sensual pleasure, is certain from his own account. But he declares, with perfect solemnity, that

* Part I. let. lv.: Œuv. ii. 127.

this passion was "la premièr et l'unique de toute sa vie."* The lady treated him with kindness, apparently as a child; his friend St. Lambert did not much relish the matter, being unable to adopt his singular habit of several lovers at one and the same time intimate with one mistress; and she became in consequence reserved and distant. An open quarrel took place with Madame d'Epinay, her sister-in-law, like many of Rousseau's quarrels, without any intelligible ground, except his taking offence at something which he had imagined, and then writing abusive letters. He wrote to say he should leave l'Ermitage; she answered that if he chose to do so he was welcome. He replied that after such a hint he could not remain a week. He removed to another house near Montmorency, and there he remained, taking very properly the opportunity of this removal to get rid of Madame le Vasseur, whom no entreaties of her daughter could induce him to keep about him any longer. With Grimm and Diderot he quarrelled irreconcileably; and his book is filled with attacks upon them both, but especially upon Grimm. He charges them, as usual, with a conspiracy, the overt acts of which were their sometimes seeing and conversing with Theresa's mother, the improper purpose of which he never could describe, or even inform us what he suspected it to be. He had some vague, half-crazy notion that they wanted to direct and guide him, and to injure his fame and to make him do foolish things,—as if they could have any conceivable interest in his degradation, or could possibly drive him to do more foolish things than he perpetually did of his own accord. Next to his quarrel with Hume, nothing so betokened a diseased mind as his suspicions of these two friends. One letter which he received from Grimm he says contained an avowal of hating him, or at least a throwing off of his friendship; but he says

* Conf. part ii. let. 9: Œuv. i. p. 423.

he never read more than the beginning of it, and that he sent it back with a violent answer.* But, unfortunately, Madame d'Epinay in her 'Memoirs' published the letter, and it contains nothing like what Rousseau complained of till the very end. Nothing, therefore, can be more inconsistent than his account of the whole transaction; and indeed his furious passion at other letters of the most indifferent kind, which he cites in his 'Confessions,' shows sufficiently that his mind laboured under morbid delusions in all this epistolary intercourse.

In his new residence he wrote the letter to D'Alembert on the article 'Genève,' of the 'Encyclopédie,' the subject being an attack upon theatrical entertainments. He says he composed it in three weeks of a severe winter, sitting in an open summer-house at the end of the garden, without fire or shelter. It had very great success, and it is written with much power. The sale of this work, with that of the 'Nouvelle Héloïse,' published in 1759, gave him 3000 francs to spare. The latter work had been printing in Holland above two years, and had frequently been read in manuscript to persons of distinction, such as the Maréchal de Luxembourg, and the Maréchale who now had the Château de Montmorency, and with whom he formed a great intimacy, insomuch that they gave him a convenient summer-house, near their orangery, where he lived occasionally. The avidity with which the work was at first read may be judged of from this, that it was lent out by the booksellers at twelve sous an hour; and instances are cited of princesses ordering their carriages at night to attend an opera or ball, and being found absorbed in the book at two in the morning so as to send their carriages away.

The 'Emile' was published in the spring of 1762, and the 'Contrat Social' a few weeks before it. 'The

* Conf. part ii. liv. 9: Œuv. i. p. 467.

Contrat,' which he appears, with the wonted soundness of an author's judgment on himself, to have valued beyond all his other works, and to have elaborated the most, is an irrefragable proof of his unfitness for all political discussion, as his 'Discourse on Political Economy' for the 'Encyclopédie' proves his equal unfitness for economical studies. It is not that he bewilders himself in all the errors and inconsistencies of an original compact, for Locke and Somers had done so before him, though he flounders in the mire very differently from Locke; but he, who pretends to write in modern times upon government, denies all virtue to the great improvement of modern policy, the representative system, declaring that the people are slaves, and the state is near its ruin, when the rights and duties of rulers are performed by any but the whole body of the citizens (lib. iii. ch. 15); that the English "are slaves, are nothing, except a few days in six or seven years."* His capacity of defining with logical precision is shown by his reckoning an elective aristocracy as one form of that polity, and of course preferring it to either a natural or an hereditary aristocracy, nay, apparently to any other kind of government, without perceiving that it is nothing like an aristocracy at all, but is, in truth, a form of the representative government which he condemns (lib. iii. ch. 5). His power of dealing with particular constitutions is seen in his comments on that of Poland, the subject of a separate treatise which he published in 1772. He considers the radical vice of the Polish government to be the extent of the country, and recommends either a federal union or the abandonment to neighbouring powers of some part of its dominions—a plan which those powers full soon caused to be adopted. The

* "Le peuple Anglais pense être libre: il se trompe fort; il ne l'est que durant l'élection des membres du Parlement; si tôt ils sont élu, il est esclave, il n'est rien. Dans les courts momens de sa liberté, l'usage qu'il en fait mérite bien qu'il la perde." (liv. iii. ch. 15.)

election of the sovereign he holds to be a good principle, under wise restrictions; and the one which he proposes is the selection by the whole people of one from among the noblemen of the first class, to be chosen by lot,—an absurdity unexampled in political reveries. ('Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne,' ch. v. xiv.)

The merits of the 'Emile' are of a much higher order; for together with wild theories, mere fantastical dreams of education, it contains a great deal of striking, though certainly not pure, composition, sometimes of a sentimental, sometimes of a declamatory kind; and it abounds in remarks, the result of personal experience or actual observation, and so entitled to much attention. The religious portion, the 'Profession de Foi d'un Vicaire Savoyard,' is that which naturally excited most attention at the time of its publication, and which still possesses the most interest. His long letter in the 'Nouvelle Héloïse' (liv. v., let. 3) contains his thoughts on the subject of education, powerfully though more concisely given; but nothing of an infidel cast was given before the 'Emile.' It is true Wolmar, a perfect character, is made first an atheist, and then a sceptic, owing to his contempt for the ceremonies of the Greek and Romish churches; and that Julie's religion is rather pure, exalted, impassioned theism, than Christianity (liv. vi., let. 5; liv. xvi., let. 7, 8), yet the Scriptures are spoken of with Christian reverence (Œuv., ii., p. 622); and both Julie dies a Christian death, and Wolmar is, in consequence, about to be converted when the curtain falls. But the 'Emile' at once declares against Revelation; it does not indeed substitute, for the Christian scheme dogmatically rejected, a dogmatical theism, but it denies the credibility of the Gospel dispensation as recorded in the Scriptures, and it substitutes a moderate but humble scepticism. There is no sarcasm, no dogmatism, no ribaldry, no abuse; the feelings of the Christian

reader are consulted, and not outraged; the weapons of attack are reasoning and sentiment, not ridicule; the author's errors are to every candid reader his misfortune, not his fault; and he gives the impression to a charitable mind of having wished to be a believer, and failed.

Nevertheless a storm ensued upon the publication of the book. M. de Malesherbes, first President of the Cour des Aides, and at the head of the Censorship (Librairie), had given it his official sanction, and it had in consequence been published at Paris and Amsterdam about the same time. But the Courts of Law interfered, and a decree of arrest was issued. Rousseau had notice through the kindness of his excellent friends the Luxembourgs, and by their aid he escaped to Neufchâtel, where Lord Marischal (Keith), the Prussian governor, protected and befriended him. Theresa followed, and appears to have in no degree increased the comforts of his residence. She soon grew tired of the solitude in which they lived—the manners of the inhabitants would not tolerate kept women; and there is every reason to think, that after feeding his suspicious mind with alarms, and making him believe that his life was in danger from the bigotry of the people, she strengthened her exhortations by pretending that his house was one night during the fair attacked by the mob. He gives a minute account of the "quarry of stones" found in the house next morning, alleging that they were thrown through the windows. But M. Servan ('Réflexions sur les Confessions') states his having been particularly informed, by a respectable person who saw the house the same day, that the holes in the windows were smaller than the stones found on the floor; and Comte d'Eschery, a passionate admirer of Rousseau, and who doubled the prize offered by the Académie Française, in 1790, for his 'Eloge,' affirms, in his 'Mélanges de Littérature' (vol. iii. p. 35 and 154), not only that Theresa, who had made herself

detested by her violent and slanderous tongue, was the principal author of the trick, but that Rousseau himself must have been her accomplice, in the hope of giving an excuse, and a colour of persecution, to his departure from Neufchâtel. The whole was reduced on examination to "a single pane of glass broken by a stone thrown from the outside in the night." The Count gives other anecdotes showing how completely Rousseau was the dupe of his own fancies. One is that when they passed a night together in the mountains, lying on some new-mown hay, and asked one another how they had slept, Jean Jacques said "he never slept;" and Col. de Pury, one of the party, stopped him by saying *he* had envied him the whole night, as he lay awake, owing to the fermenting of the hay beneath him, while the sleepless philosopher snored without any intermission. Of Theresa the Count speaks with constant scorn and dislike, as of a most silly, vulgar, and mischievous person, having only the one accomplishment of being a very good cook. But Rousseau never suffered her to sit at table, though he was continually taking the most ignorant and stupid things she said for proofs of her natural sense.

It seems here the place to observe that Rousseau distinctly admits his never having felt for a moment the least love for this poor creature (Confessions, Part ii., liv. ix.: Œuv., i., 378)—"la moindre étincelle d'amour." Whatever she may have felt for him, he tells us had become nearly extinguished long before 1768, when he married her; indeed his treatment of her, as well by forming other attachments as by tearing her five infants from her on their birth, and while she was in the first weakness of childbearing, was quite enough to make her weary of him, if his temper had been far less irritable than a diseased bladder, bad stomach, and half crazy brain, allowed it to be. That he had a great contempt for her understanding, and

no confidence in her virtue or her disposition, is quite plain from a letter which he wrote her in 1769, and which is preserved. Her complaints of the tiresome life they led, and her constant threats of leaving him, appear to have given rise to this letter, together with a complaint of a less delicate kind to which he adverts in plain terms enough, but which no other pen can well touch upon. Her conduct in England gave the greatest offence to Mr. Davenport; and, among other tricks to which she resorted for the purpose of making Rousseau suspect everybody, and thus resolve to quit Wootton, of which she as easily tired as she did of Switzerland, she broke open his letters, and made him fancy that his enemies had done it.

After they quitted Neufchâtel, in 1765, they went to live for a few months in the Isle St. Pierre, an islet in the Lac de Bienne, belonging to the hospital of Bern. Here he indulged in his botanical pursuits, and fancied that he led a quiet wild life, as in a state of nature. The invitation sent through Madame de Boufflers, from David Hume, to visit England, brought him from his solitude, and he accompanied the philosopher thither. Mr. Davenport soon afterwards invited him to inhabit his convenient mansion of Wootton in Derbyshire. A pension of £100 a-year was obtained for him through Mr. Hume's influence with the Conway family, and it appears to have been the only overt act of the conspiracy in which he soon believed Mr. Hume had joined to ruin his character for ever. Another suspicion proved quite as groundless. Horace Walpole having written a jeu d'esprit which amused the Parisian circles—a letter from Frederick inviting him to Berlin, but warning him that he never would gratify him by any of the persecution he so greatly delighted in—Rousseau fancied Hume had written this, in which he had no hand whatever.

That actual insanity had now undermined his reason, was become quite apparent. The most indifferent

things were converted into proofs of a conspiracy, the object of which was, if possible, more utterly incomprehensible than the scheme ascribed to Grimm and Diderot. In the 'Confessions' he refers to this English plot, and says, that "he sees marching towards its execution, without any resistance, the most black, the most frightful conspiracy that ever was devised against a man's memory," (Conf., part ii. lib. xi.; Œuv., i. 550). He also fancied that the government, a party to it by granting the pension, was preventing him from leaving the country; nay, he wrote to General Conway, then Secretary of State, that he was aware his departure never could be suffered. That letter, indeed, is as completely the production of a madman as any that ever was penned within the walls of Bedlam. He wrote it from Dover, whither he had gone by a rapid journey from Spalding, in Lincolnshire, having first gone to Spalding from Wootton, to escape his enemies and the agents of government. After living ten months in England, he came over to France, changing his name to Renou, and went to Amiens, where, though he was received with high distinction by every one, and even by the authorities of the place, he still felt suspicious and uneasy. In autumn, 1767, he went to Trye le Château, a place of Prince de Conti's, where he remained a year in the same irritable and suspicious state of mind. It must be added to these undoubted symptoms of mental disease, that, some years after, and when his mind had regained composure, he really admitted his having been so affected. No man confesses madness in terms, even after it has ceased. We find George III., in a letter to Lord Eldon, in which, after his recovery (1804), he refused to have his mad doctor still about him, only says, that "patients in a '*nervous fever*,' when well, cannot bear the presence of those who had the care of them in their illness." (Twiss's Life, vol. i., p. 382). So Rousseau softened his admission, when conversing

with Bernardin de St. Pierre:—"J'ai mis trop d'humeur dans mes querelles avec M. Hume; mais le climat d'Angleterre, la situation de ma fortune, et les persécutions que je venais d'essuyer, tout me jetait dans la mélancolie." (L'Arcadie, Préambule.)

When he quitted Trye, in June, 1768, he went to Grenoble, and soon after to Bougoin, in the Lyonnais. That vanity was at the bottom of his malady, no one could doubt, even if the proof did not exist under his hand. But he scrawled, when passing through Lyons, a number of sentences on the door of his bed-room, and afterwards sent a copy of them to a lady there; they show that he considered the whole world as occupied with him, and all but kings, bishops, and the higher nobility, as his bitter enemies. (Cor., ii. 380). From Bougoin he went to Monguin, a village in the neighbourhood, at the beginning of 1769, and there chose to fall acquainted with a retired officer, M. St. Germain, on whom he forced his most confidential friendship, and who told him plainly, that, seeing the disordered state of his fancy, he preferred his own plain sense to all his philosophy. This worthy man, however, though very religious, and as different from him as possible in his character, conceived that warm friendship which so many people felt for him, chiefly from the pity which his weakness and misery inspired, partly from the infantine openness of his heart. His letters at this time are all dated in a cypher, like those of the Quakers;* and he begins each letter with four bad verses, about men being poor creatures. Nothing can be more dull than his correspondence during the two years which he spent in this neighbourhood. He could, however, no longer refrain from the food which Paris offered to his vanity; and after resolving to visit Chambery, partly, he said, to weep over the recollection of Madame de Warens, who had died while

* Thus for 15th January, 1769, $\frac{1}{15}$ 1769.

he was at Neufchâtel, partly to discomfit his enemies, because they would not know he was there, he all at once says, "Ne parlons plus de Chambery: l'honneur et le devoir crient, et je n'entends plus que leur voix." So away he goes to Paris, where he creates by his arrival, some sensation, and more by his reading the 'Confessions' in select circles; and this is all the explanation ever given of what he meant by the calls of honour and duty. From July, 1770, when he returned, to March, 1778, when he removed to Ermenonville, he remained at Paris. With M. St. Germain he never had a minute's difference of any kind; yet he entirely gave over writing to him for the last seven years of his life. With all his former friends he quarrelled; and half a year before his death he wrote and sent a circular, representing himself and his wife as so much reduced that they could no longer live out of a work-house, and begging to be sent to some hospital, where their little income might be used for their support. It is plain that he would have greatly wished some friend, some of the supposed conspirators, to send him there without his asking it; but as no one thought of doing so, the circular was issued. It was all a pretence. At Ermenonville, he immediately became so much pleased with the place, that he began writing, and seemed as contented as his nature would allow him to be. Two friends, much attached to him, and alarmed by the tone of the circular, ascertained that it was all a trick—there is no other word to give it—a trick to attract pity, and make his persecutions be credited. Nor can any one doubt, that had he been taken at his word, he would have proclaimed the grand plot as having reached its consummation. He died suddenly, on the 2d of July, 1778, apparently of apoplexy, having immediately before come home ill from a walk, and complained of a pain in the head. He had only been at Ermenonville six weeks. He was buried, at his own request, on the island in the lake

there. The report of his suicide was utterly without foundation, though Madame de Staël, in her clever 'Essay' on his genius, gives it countenance. It has been again and again completely disproved.

In 1790 the National Assembly bestowed a pension of 1200 francs on his widow, which the Convention, in 1793, increased to 1500, ordering also a statue to his memory. The following year his remains were transferred to the Pantheon, with those of Voltaire, and others of the great men to whom the simple and striking inscription of that noble edifice refers.* The example of Paris was followed in the other towns which he had at any time honoured with his residence. His statue was erected at Geneva; and at Lyons, Grenoble, Montpelier, almost wherever he had dwelt, celebrations in honour of his memory were had.

The pension, and the interest of considerable funds (nearly 40,000 francs) which the different publishers owed her husband, amply provided for his widow. But that worthless creature, immediately after his death, formed a connection with an Irishman, a groom of M. Girardin, owner of Ermenonville. With him she lived until he had spent all her money, and she was in her old age reduced to beggary. In that state she used to take her stand and beg at the door of the theatre. She died in 1801, at the age of 80.

All Rousseau's works, except his posthumous memoirs, the 'Confessions,' we have had occasion already to consider. But that is, beyond any question, and very much beyond any comparison, his masterpiece. There is no work in the French language of which the style is more racy, and, indeed, more classically pure. But its diction is idiomatical as well as pure. As if he had lived long enough away from Geneva to lose not only all the provincialisms of that place, but also to lose all its pedantry and precision, he writes both

* Aux Grands Hommes, la Patrie Reconnaissante.

with the accuracy and elegance of a Frenchman, and with the freedom of wit and of genius, even of humour and drollery—yes, even of humour and drollery; for the picture of the vulgar young man who supplanted him with Madame de Warens shows no mean power of caricature; and the sketches of his own ludicrous situations, as at the concert he gave in the Professor's house at Lausanne, show the impartiality with which he could exert this power at his own proper cost and charge. The subject is often tiresome; it is almost always his own sufferings, and genius, and feelings; always, of course, but of that no complaint can be justly made, of his own adventures; yet we are carried irresistibly along, first of all by the manifest truth and sincerity of the narrative which the fulness of the humiliating confessions at every step attests, and then, and chiefly, by the magical diction,—a diction so idiomatical and yet so classical—so full of nature and yet so refined by art—so exquisitely graphic without any effort, and so accommodated to its subject without any baseness,—that there hardly exists another example of the miracles which composition can perform. The subject is not only wearisome from its sameness, but, from the absurdities of the author's conduct, and opinions, and feelings, it is revolting; yet on we go, enchained and incapable of leaving it, how often soever we may feel irritated and all but enraged. The subject is not only wearisome generally, revolting frequently, but it is oftentimes low, vulgar, grovelling, fitted to turn us away from the contemplation with aversion, even with disgust; yet the diction of the great magician is our master; he can impart elegance to the most ordinary and mean things, in his description of them; he can elevate the lowest, even the most nasty ideas, into dignity by the witchery of his language. We stand aghast after pausing, when we can take breath, and can see over what filthy ground we have been led, but we feel the extraordinary power of

the hand that has led us along. It is one of Homer's great praises, that he ennobles the most low and homely details of the most vulgar life, as when he brings Ulysses into the swineherd's company, and paints the domestic economy of that unadorned and ignoble peasant. No doubt the diction is sweet in which he warbles those ordinary strains; yet the subject, how humble soever, is pure unsophisticated nature, with no taint of the far more insufferable pollution derived from vice. Not so Rousseau's subject: he sings of vices, and of vices the most revolting and the most base—of vices which song never before came near to elevate; and he sings of the ludicrous and the offensive as well as the hateful and the repulsive, yet he sings without impurity, and contrives to entrance us in admiration. No triumph so great was ever won by diction. The work in this respect stands alone; it is reasonable to wish that it may have no imitators.

But is it as faithful in all particulars as it is striking and attractive—as scrupulously faithful as the awful eloquence of its commencement ought to have kept it throughout? In the great majority of instances, it certainly is entitled to this praise; but exceptions, it must be admitted, there are. One has been noted respecting his age when he committed the great crime against his fellow-servant at Turin; though this is rather apparent than real, inasmuch as he himself has furnished the means of detection.—But the 'Correspondence' frequently indicates suppressions in the 'Confessions,' especially his letter 1732 to his father, and 1735 to his aunt; for he there speaks of grave faults which he had committed, and of which the 'Confessions' give no intimation.—It is also certain both that his friends represent his manner of living with Theresa differently from himself, and that his letter to her after their marriage gives an idea of her wholly different from that conveyed by the 'Memoirs.' —The story of the attack upon his house at Neuf-

châtel, too, is quite a fiction, and must have been, by the evidence of l'Eschery, a wilful one.—The account of his bold and resolute conduct towards Count de Montaigue, at Venice, is probably much exaggerated. Nothing can be more unlike the rest of his life; and his letters to the Foreign Department omit every portion of it, though they are very full on all the other circumstances.*—The letter he wrote to Voltaire, too, in 1765, saying he was "an impudent liar" if he represented him as having been a servant instead of Secretary of Embassy at Venice, seems somewhat too strong, when we find him, in his own letters to the Foreign Department, plainly calling himself, over and over again, a "domestique," and though sometimes a secretary, yet speaking of the relations between master and domestique in plain terms.† He drew the distinction between domestique and valet, indeed; but surely he could not after this complain of any one doubting whether he ever had been Secretary of Embassy.—It is another great discrepancy between his book and his 'Correspondence,' that while he complains to the Foreign Office of being left penniless at Venice, and without the means of returning home, he states, in his 'Confessions,' that at the Consul's, where he dined the day he quitted the Embassy, "every purse at table was opened to him," and he accepted a sum which he mentions, forty sequins, for the necessary expenses of his journey; and he also gives the names of the two persons who lent him the money.‡—The remark seems quite fair, too, as well as obvious, that from the moment when he first formed the plan of reading his book to select circles, we lose the entire confidence inspired by the earlier parts of the book; and though he may not, till after he grew tired of England, and

* Compare Conf. part ii. lib. vii. (Œuv. i. 299), and Corresp. i. (Œuv. vii.)

† Compare Cor. ii. (Œuv. viii. p. 71) and i. (Œuv. vii. 53, p. 53–59.)

‡ Conf. and Cor. ib.

returned to Bougoin, have intended to give these readings at Paris, he probably had, for some time before, an idea that he should at one period or other read or show, if not publish, them.

Of his character it is almost as easy to speak with confidence as of his writings. It seems certain that so much genius never was in any other man united to so much weakness. The fruits of an education exceedingly neglected, nay, in his earlier years very ill directed, were gathered from his youth upwards at each stage of his progress; but many men have been as much neglected, and many more spoilt in their childhood and boyhood, without ever becoming what he was. We are to add, therefore, to the causes of his misery, perhaps of his misconduct, an hereditary disposition to melancholy, to brooding sadly over realities, and to indulging in the sad miseries of the imagination. Nor was this all: he formed a kind of system or principle for himself of the most unsound nature and dangerous tendency. He seems to have thought that the free indulgence of the feelings was a duty as well as a privilege, and never to have doubted that those feelings which naturally arise in the breast are therefore innocent and right. The only evil which he could perceive was in their restraint; and as even to regulate them is to restrain, he regarded such self-government not only as superfluous, but as hurtful. The current was in his view pure and harmless; the obstacles which broke its course, the dykes which confined it, the canals which guided it, were alone the objects of aversion and of blame. It is obvious to ask if he who had undertaken to write upon education a work of much length and elaboration, had ever observed the workings of our nature in infants, in very young children. It is a branch of the subject which he seems never to have studied; else he must have seen how the mere animal predominates at that age. At first pure selfishness prevails, and indulgence of every

appetite is the rule. Next succeeds, with nearly equal selfishness, fear as soon as any restraint is applied, and fear invariably leads to seeking the protection of falsehood. All natural propensities are eagerly indulged; all restraint is distasteful. Among others, the love of truth is a restraint imposed by tuition, and like all restraints, it is a violence to natural propensities. Now Rousseau erected into his rule of conduct the self-indulgence which the rules of reason and virtue proscribe alike. The divinity he worshipped was sentiment, feeling, often amiable, often reasonable, sometimes contrary to reason, sometimes inconsistent with virtue; and always, when indulged in excess, offending against reason, and leading to offences against virtue. Whoever reads his 'Confessions' must perceive that he never could conceive he was acting wrong when he was following the bent of his feelings; scarcely that he was acting imprudently when he was sacrificing to them his own plainest and highest interests. To such a pitch was his folly on this point, this cardinal point, carried, that we find him unable to conceive how any one could ever reproach a man with his worst crimes after he had once openly avowed them, or rather after he had allowed certain things to be wrong; for, having admitted in the 'Emile' that whoever under any pretext or from any motive whatever withdrew from the performance of his parental duties, must expect ever after to weep bitterly over his fault (*sa faute*), he declares that it "was surprising any person after such an avowal could ever have the courage to reproach him with the fault" (*faute*) of sending his five infants to the Foundling Hospital. He altogether forgets that the courage of making such confessions, even had they been much more full and specific, instead of being any defence to ward off the punishment of universal reprobation, was a virtue of an equivocal kind, and might be taken as easily for callous impudence as for sincere penitence.

The natural result of the system on which his moral feelings were built, was that the most undeviating selfishness took possession of his whole soul. Self-indulgence was his rule—self-restraint his abhorrence. The sophistry with which he so constantly seeks to cover over this vice is pitiable when it is not ridiculous. For many years he had almost ceased even to write to Madame de Warens; and for above two years after his removal to Neufchâtel, the last years of her miserable life, she was, as he too well knew, plunged in the depths of misery—she who had supported him while she had a farthing to give—she to whom he owed his whole existence for the first ten years and the most destitute of his life—she for whom he had so often avowed, and also felt, the most tender affection, and who had ever treated him like an anxious mother—not only did he remain for those two years a day's journey from her residence without ever repairing to see and to console, if he could not relieve and reclaim her, but he never gave her the comfort of a letter to show he still bore her image in his heart—and why? "because he feared to sadden her heart (*contrister son cœur*) with the story of his disasters!"*—As if she had not real disasters of her own—as if the straw on which she was perishing of want offered not wherewithal to touch her more nearly than the tale of his fancied wrongs and trumpery persecutions! The least sagacity is enough to pierce through this flimsy veil of hypocritical cant. Every one sees that he was unwilling to interrupt his own enjoyments by the sight of her misery, and therefore did not repair to Chambery—that he was unwilling to interrupt his walks, or his readings, or his writings, or his musings, and therefore did not write letters that might have led to asking assistance which he did not choose to give.

The sentiment of religion, if not its principles, was

* Conf. and Cor. 600.

deeply impressed on his mind; he never could endure the rank infidelity of the d'Holbach circle, nor even the modified infidelity of Voltaire. It is indeed made the main ground of his charges against him. Though he himself aimed deadly blows, and with malice aforethought, at Revelation, he was as intolerant of Voltaire's sneers and scoffs as if he had been the most pious of men; and as if of too pure eyes to behold such iniquity, he refused even to read 'Candide,' though he says it was written in answer to his own 'Letter on Evil.' To trifle with so sacred a subject, therefore, was in his eyes a crime of a deep dye. To shelter himself from temporal power by spiritual, to make a gain by belief, was to him a vice of a more vile and sordid aspect still. Yet did he, with his eyes open and his understanding uncontrolled, change his religion twice—becoming a Catholic for the hope of an income, a Protestant for the rank of a burgess, when probably he neither at the one change nor the other was a Christian at all; and at a subsequent period, long after he had proclaimed his unbelief to the world, he went through the mockery of taking the sacrament in the hope of screening himself from annoyances or of reconciling himself to the favour of the Calvinists at Geneva. No more selfish and unprincipled conduct can be easily cited of any man who had Rousseau's deep feelings of the importance properly attached to all religious subjects.

The crime of his life which is most dwelt upon, and can never be held up to sufficient execration, has been already more than once referred to; it was entirely the result of the same selfish disposition, the same confirmed incapacity to see or feel any other existence than his own. What incurable folly to suppose that any one could be duped, or that he was himself duped, by the pretence of his having an insufficient income, and being unwilling that his children should be brought up in penury! How could a man of ordinary reflec-

tion avoid perceiving a refutation of his defence each time that he swallowed a morsel more palatable than bread and water? How could a man of ordinary feeling avoid tasting in each such morsel the bitterness of an asp's gall? But his circumstances mended—he became possessed of money—did he endeavour to repair the mischief he had done? He hardly allowed Madame de Luxembourg to make inquiry as to one of his exposed children, and after none of them did he himself ever inquire. He was determined to lead his own life of misery, and vanity, and self-indulgence, uninterrupted by the cries or the claims of a family, the bringing of whom into the world was his own act, also an act of self-indulgence.

A part of this his moral nature, and a material part of it, was his vanity, perhaps greater than ever had dominion over a highly gifted mind. That this was the point, as not unfrequently happens, upon which the insanity turned which clouded some of his later years, is certain; but no less certainly may we perceive its malignant influence through the whole of his course. He laboured under a great delusion upon this subject; for he actually conceived that he had less vanity than any other person that ever existed; and he has given expression to this notion. The ground of the delusion plainly was, that he often forgot this indulgence in pursuit of others; and also, that he had less shame than other men in unveiling his faults and frailties, when their disclosure ministered to any ruling propensity, not seldom when it fed that same vanity itself. But no one can read his account of the fancies he took in his early years, and not perceive how strikingly the love of distinction prevailed in him even then, and while his existence was perfectly obscure. The displays that captivated him, excited his envy, and even led to his uncouth attempts at imitation, were not the solid qualities or valuable acquirements of those he saw at Annecy or at Turin, but the base tricks and

superficial accomplishments of a Bacler and a Venture, performers of the lowest order, but who, he perceived, were followed by public applause. Later in life he seems to have been almost insensible to any existence but his own; or when he could believe in that of external objects, it was always in reference to himself; and at last this feeling reached the morbid temperature of fancying that he and his concerns were the only thing about which all other men cared, and with which all were occupying themselves; thus absorbing in self-contemplation all the faculties and all the feelings of his own mind.*

That with all his failings and all his faults, he could win his way to many hearts, is easily to be understood; for, beside the genius, and latterly the fame, which dazzled beholders, some of his weaknesses were of a kind that interested benevolent natures, partly through compassion, partly from the openness and infantine simplicity with which they were attended; and as long as he did not conceive the suspicions which generally broke out sooner or later, none of those weaknesses were of a kind which offended others. The interest which not only kindly natures, like that of the Luxembourgs, and such good-humoured companions as David Hume, but such stern personages as St. Lambert, St. Germain, Lord Mareschal, took in him and his fortunes, is a sufficient illustration of these remarks; but it may be doubted if that interest could have survived such a full disclosure as we now have of his defects since his death.

In society he must have been, when his mind was sound and his irritability calmed, and his painful con-

* Perhaps the most extraordinary creation of fancy in which his morbid vanity indulged, was his believing that he perceived a marked increase of Hume's popularity at Paris in consequence of his having asked Rousseau's company on his journey to London (Œuv. viii. 166, and again in his crazy letter to Hume himself, ib. 186), and this while he was complaining of having no supporters, and of all men being his enemies!

stitutional maladies soothed or intermitted,* a very pleasing mixture, possibly a delightful companion. He greatly underrates himself in this particular. It is true, as he frequently says, that his shyness often made him appear dull, often gave birth to absurd sayings, and even grotesque conduct; it is also possibly true that he was not ready in repartee, which he expressed by saying, "Qu'il avait l'esprit un quart d'heure après tout le monde." Yet we have a strong testimony to the charms of his conversation in the words of a respectable witness, M. Dussaulx, who, speaking of a party he gave to Rousseau, among others, in 1771, exclaims, "A quelque nuages près, mon Dieu, qu'il fut aimable ce jour là!—tantôt enjoué, tantôt sublime. Avant le dîner il nous donnait à quelquesuns les plus innocentes anecdotes consignées dans les 'Confessions.' Plusieurs d'entre nous les connaissaient déjà; mais il sût leur donner une physiognomie nouvelle, et plus de mouvement encore que dans son livre. J'ose dire qu'il ne se connaissait pas lui-même lorsqu'il prétendait que la nature lui avait refusé le don de la parole. La solitude sans doute avait concentré ce talent en lui-même; mais dans ces moments d'abandon, et lorsque rien ne l'offusquait, il débordait comme un torrent impétueux que rien ne résiste."†

It is never permitted to vindicate, or even to palliate, crimes by citing the defects of physical temperament; no course can be more dangerous to virtue; and where the reason is only undermined by indulgence, by weaknesses which exertion and self-restraint might in time have extirpated or counteracted, the excuse which is sometimes made of mental disease

* He had not only a bladder complaint and a hemorrhoidal malady, but was for years supposed to have the stone. On his being sounded, in 1762, this was found to be a mistake: he was, however, found to have a scirrhous prostate gland.

† De mes Rapports avec J. J. Rousseau, p. 99.

likewise fails. Rousseau's malady was probably of this description; but weaknesses are to be palliated, if not pitied, by a view of bodily sufferings such as he certainly endured; and as far as irritable temper and restless disposition are concerned, let no one severely blame them, or even look down too proudly on the conduct which they prompted, without reflecting charitably and compassionately upon the diseased state in which much of his life was passed, and considering in common fairness how much less impatient and irritable he would himself have proved under the same infliction.

APPENDIX.

It appears from the whole correspondence with M. de St. Germain, which I have seen, that two or three letters not published were written to him by Rousseau after his arrival in Paris, 1770 and 1771. From that time to his death, in 1778, none appear.

The following epitaph on Voltaire by Rousseau has not, as it seems, ever before been published. It may appear somewhat to qualify the praise bestowed on the latter for his treatment of that great man; and though written with spirit, is extremely unjust.

"Plus bel esprit que grand génie,
Sans loi, sans mœurs, et sans vertu;
Il est mort comme il a vécu,
Couvert de gloire et d'infamie."

NOTE

TO THE

LIVES OF VOLTAIRE AND ROUSSEAU.

THE French critics appear to have greatly misapprehended the object of this work when they have asked what occasion there was to write lives of Voltaire and Rousseau, when there was no new information conveyed respecting those celebrated persons, and no new judgment pronounced upon their works. They seem to have been misled by the accidental circumstance of the French publication only containing these two pieces, which, however, formed part of a series comprehending all the men of science and letters who flourished in the time of George III. Surely my French friends and neighbours would have been the first to complain had Voltaire and Rousseau been left out of the list. In the most severe of the criticisms which have appeared of these two Lives, I have to acknowledge the very courteous and even friendly style of the learned and ingenious author, M. Berville; but he will permit me to express no small satisfaction at finding that, after all, he confirms almost every opinion which I had ventured to pronounce upon Voltaire, the subject to which his remarks are almost exclusively confined. As for the want of novelty, nothing can be more perilous than running after discoveries on the merits of works that have been before the world for almost a century, and on which the most unlimited discussion has taken place. It may, however, perhaps be thought that, in one respect, the Life of Voltaire differs from its predecessors. There is certainly no bias either of nation, or of party, or of sect shown in the opinions given whether of the personal merits or the works of that great man. On one subject M. Berville evidently has entirely misapprehended me, when he says I have expressed an opinion dif-

ferent from Clairaut's on Voltaire's scientific capacity. Clairaut's judgment was confined apparently to subjects of pure mathematics; and I have only ventured to wish that either it had been expressly so limited, or that it had been so understood by Voltaire, whose capacity for experimental philosophy, though not for the mathematics, I ventured to consider was very great. Of this I have given the proofs, and M. Berville considers them as an important addition to what had hitherto been said of Voltaire.

Respecting the Life of Rousseau, his opinion is much more severe; but on this subject I never can hope to agree with a writer who manifestly regards that individual as a great benefactor of his species, and as having waged a war against tyranny equally successful with Voltaire's against priestcraft. Rousseau's political works are wholly beneath contempt. No proofs are required to show the ignorance and even incapacity of a writer whose notions of the representative system—the greatest political improvement of modern times—are such, that he holds a people to be enslaved during the whole interval between one election and another—a dogma which makes it utterly impossible for any free state to exist whose inhabitants amount to more than fifteen hundred or two thousand. But, in truth, it is not as a political writer that Rousseau now retains any portion of the reputation which he once enjoyed. His fame rests upon a paradoxical discourse against all knowledge, a second-rate novel, and an admirably written, but degrading, and even disgusting autobiography. The critic is very indignant at the grave censure which I pronounced on this last work, and on the vices by which it showed the author to have been contaminated. I deliberately re-affirm my opinion as formerly expressed on the subject; nor can I imagine a more reprehensible use of faculties, such as Rousseau certainly possessed, than the composition of a narrative, some parts of which cannot be read without disgust by any person whose mind is ordinarily pure.

CHATEAU ELEANOR-LOUISE, PROVENCE,
5th January, 1846.

HUME.

GREATLY distinguished as the people of Great Britain had ever been for their achievements in all the other walks of literature and science, it is certain that there never had appeared among them any historian of eminence before the middle of the eighteenth century. The country of Bacon, of Newton, of Locke, of Napier—the country of Milton, of Shakspeare, and Buchanan—of Dryden, Swift, Bolingbroke—had as yet nothing more to produce as the rival of ancient historical fame than the crude and partial annals of Buchanan, great only as a poet, and the far more classical and less prejudiced political Memoirs rather than 'History' of Clarendon. While Italy had her Davila and Guicciardini, and France her Thuanus (Du Thou), this island was nearly unknown for any native annals, and a Frenchman (Rapin de Thoyras) had provided the only 'History of England' which any one could find readable, nor in reading that could he affect to find pleasure. It was reserved for two natives of Scotland to remove such an unhappy peculiarity, and to place our fame in this important walk of literature upon a level with our eminence in all its other departments. Mr. Hume first entered the field; and though his is by no means the work on which the historical merit of the country mainly rests (for he had neither the impartiality nor the patience of the historical office), yet he is decidedly to be praised as having been the first to enter the field with the talents of a fine writer, and the habits of a philosophic inquirer.

David Hume was born at Edinburgh, in April,

1711. He was the younger son of Mr. Hume of Ninewells, in the county of Berwick, and related to Earl Hume's, or Home's, family; his mother was the daughter of Sir David Falconer, Lord President, and niece of Lord Halkerston, one of the Judges of the Court of Session. His father dying soon after his birth, his guardians intended him for the bar; but he tells us that while "he was supposed to be poring over Voet and Vinning, he was secretly devouring the pages of Cicero and Virgil." He neglected Greek in his early years, and had to make up for this deficiency, with some labour, in after life.

The fortune of his father, to which his eldest brother Joseph succeeded, was inconsiderable; and his own portion being necessarily very small, it was deemed expedient, as he refused to be a lawyer, that he should exert himself in some other way to provide for his support. He was therefore sent to a mercantile house at Bristol, in 1734; but he found the drudgery of this employment intolerable, and he retired to Rheims, in the north of France, determined, while he prosecuted his favourite studies, to supply, by rigorous economy and a life of abstinence, the want of fortune. From Rheims he removed to La Flèche, in Anjou, and there wrote his 'Treatise on Human Nature.' It was published in 1737, and fell, as he says, still-born from the press. He afterwards distributed it into separate 'Essays,' which, with additions, he published in 1742, and it had more success.

After his first publication he retired to his brother's house, and lived so happily there among his books that he afterwards says, in a letter to Dr. Robertson, that he should never have left it, had not his brother's marriage made a change in the family. Although he appears to have felt much more and much earlier than Robertson the love of literary fame, his first work having been published when he was only 26, while the 'History of Scotland' only appeared in the

author's 38th year, yet manifestly the same love of literary pursuits for their own sake, the desire of knowledge, the indulgence of a speculative turn, and meditating on the events of past times and on the systems of former inquirers, appears to have been the mainspring of both their movements; and Hume was happy in being allowed to gratify these strong propensities of his nature.

The last Marquess of Annandale was a person of weak intellect. Though neither insane nor idiotic, he required the company of a friend, as his imbecility excluded him from society, and he was not ill enough to require the care of a keeper. Mr. Hume, in 1745, accepted this situation, as a large salary was very naturally given to induce him. But after a year's residence, finding, as we see from the late publication of some querulous letters very little like his ordinary correspondence, that he could no longer submit to such a life, he left this occupation, and was fortunate enough to receive an invitation immediately after of a very different kind. It was to attend, as private secretary, General St. Clair (a relation of Lord Loughborough, and great-uncle of the late Lord Rosslyn), whose family has always been honourably distinguished by their love of literary society. The General was appointed to command an expedition, at first destined for the conquest of Canada, but afterwards very unwisely, and with no result any more than any rational design, diverted to the folly of making an incursion on the coast of France. The following year, 1747, he accompanied the General on his embassy to the courts of Vienna and Turin. This mission was of a military nature, and the philosopher tells us that he was not only Secretary, but Aide-de-camp, with two military men—Captain, afterwards General, Grant, and Sir Henry Erskine, afterwards a General officer also, and nephew of the Ambassador. These two years, 1746 and 1747, formed the only interruption ever

given to his studies; but they appear to have satisfied him in one important particular; for, "not only," he says, "I passed this period of time agreeably and in good company, but my appointments with frugality had made me reach a fortune which I called independent, though most of my friends were incited to smile when I said so; in short, I was now master of near a thousand pounds."

While he was at Turin, his 'Inquiry concerning the Human Understanding' was published in London. It was the 'Treatise on Human Nature' presented in a new form, and was not much more successful than its predecessor; but he nevertheless began to perceive symptoms of his books coming into notice; "for," says he, "I found, by Dr. Warburton's railing, that they are beginning to be esteemed in good company." Returning to Scotland, he again resided with his brother, and wrote his 'Political Discourses,' which were published in 1752, and immediately excited much attention. "The work was," he says, "well received both at home and abroad." But he published, the same year, the 'Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals,' which "came," he says, "unnoticed and unobserved into the world:" though he adds, that "in his own opinion it is incomparably the best of all his writings, historical, philosophical, or literary." It is plain, then, that neither in their original forms of treatises, forms three times varied, nor when broken down into separate essays, did his metaphysical and theological speculations succeed so far as even to obtain any attention. This is the more surprising, that beside the great ingenuity and novelty of some theories which they contain, they are tinged throughout with an excessive scepticism upon all subjects of a religious nature, and upon some with an openly professed unbelief, which might have been expected to excite indignation, and so rescue the writings from neglect. The 'Essays, Moral and Metaphysical,' are

the form in which we now read these speculations, and a life of Hume which should not speak of their merits would be imperfect, as they certainly have long obtained the full share of celebrity which was at first denied them.

To refuse these well-known Essays the praise of great subtilty, much clever argument, some successful sarcasm, and very considerable originality, is impossible; but a love of singularity, an aversion to agree with other men, and particularly with the bulk of the people, prevails very manifestly throughout the work; and we may recollect that it is the author's earliest production, the 'Treatise on Human Nature,' which formed the basis of the whole, having been written before his six-and-twentieth year, at an age when the distinction of differing with the world, the boldness of attacking opinions held sacred by mankind at large, is apt to have most charms for vain and ambitious minds.

Accordingly, he finds all wrong in the opinions which men generally entertain, whether upon moral, metaphysical, or theological subjects, and he pushes his theories to an extreme point in almost every instance. Thus, that we only know the connection between events by their succession one to another in point of time, and that what we term causation, the relation of cause and effect, is really only the constant precedence of one event, act, or thing to another, is now admitted by all reasoners; and we owe to Mr. Hume the discovery, it may be well called, of this important truth. But he will not stop here: he must deny that there can be such a thing as one act, or event, or thing, causing another: he must hold that there can be no such thing as causation, no such thing as power; he must discard from our belief those ideas which all men in all ages have held so distinctly, and so universally, as to have given them names, specific appellations, in all languages. He denies all connection, all influence, all power, and holds it impossible

that any such things should be—that any rational meaning should belong to such words.—In like manner, every one is ready to admit the solidity of the distinction which he takes between the impressions of memory and those of imagination. But this won't satisfy him; he will have all belief to consist merely in this difference, and that we only believe or disbelieve any thing or any event according as our minds have a more or less vivid idea of it from memory, or from sensation, than from imagination. So again, while no objection could be taken to his holding that a miracle is, *prima facie*, to be regarded incredible, because it is much more likely, and much more according to the laws of nature, that human testimony should deceive us, even that men's senses should delude them, than that those laws should be suddenly and violently suspended, yet he will not be satisfied unless we go a great step farther, and admit not merely the improbability but the impossibility of miracles, as if the weight of testimony never could be so accumulated as to make it more unlikely, more a miracle, that it should be false, than that the alleged deviation from the laws of nature should have taken place.* Indeed, had he lived to see the late discoveries in Fossil Osteology, he would have been placed in a complete dilemma; for these plainly show, that at one remote period in the history of the globe there was such an interposition of creative power as could alone form man and other animals not previously existing; and thus he must either have distrusted the evidence of thousands now alive, and even of his own senses, the phenomenon being visible daily, or he must have admitted the miracle of creation; that is, the interposition of a Being powerful to suspend the existing order of things, and make a new one.

* In the first part of the 'Essay' this qualification is introduced, but the second part roundly asserts the absolute impossibility, on the ground of the laws of nature being broken.

It is by no means correct to affirm, as some do, and Mr. Hume himself among the number, that his writings are only sceptical. Many of them amount merely to doubts; but some, under the mask of doubts, are essentially dogmatical. Indeed, some of his speculations are upon subjects which cannot be treated sceptically; for the question in those cases being whether we have evidence or not of the position, whoever maintains the negative denies the position. Thus, to take the most important example of all, the argument upon Providence and a Future State is of this very character. The question, and none other equal in importance can exercise the human faculties, is, whether we have or not, by the light of nature, sufficient evidence to make us believe in a Deity and the Soul's Immortality. His argument is, not that there is any doubt on the subject, but that we have no such evidence; consequently his position must be that there is no ground for believing in a God or a Future State. It is easy to say Mr. Hume was not an atheist; and that neither he nor any man can in one sense of the word be an atheist is certain. If by denying a God we mean believing that his non-existence is proved, there neither is nor can be an atheist, because there cannot possibly be conceived any demonstration of that negative proposition. To prove that a man asserted to be in existence, exists not, we must either show that he once existed, and has ceased to exist, or that he never existed, but more certainly the former than the latter, because the former alone can be considered to leave the proposition quite certain. Now, clearly this kind of proof is inconceivable as to a Deity; consequently no man in this sense can be an atheist, if his understanding be sound. But we really mean by atheist as contradistinguished from sceptic, one who holds that there exists no evidence of a Deity, as contradistinguished from him who only entertains doubts on the subject—doubts whether there be evidence or

no. Mr. Hume's argument, if solid, shows that there is no evidence, and not that there are doubts; consequently the inference from his argument is, not that we have reason for doubting whether or not there is proof, but that we have no proof, and, therefore, if consistent with ourselves, admitting his argument, we must not believe; that is, we must disbelieve. In the ordinary sense of the word, and as far as it is possible for the thing to exist, this is atheism, not scepticism. On miracles, no one has ever contended that the author's doctrine amounted only to scepticism. He does not doubt at all—he denies, and not only denies negatively that any miracle was ever proved by evidence, but affirms positively that none ever can be so proved. His whole argument goes to this; and between the impossibility of a miracle ever having been performed, and the total want of evidence of a Deity by the light of nature, we are left not to doubt, but to deny both providence and a future state. The one argument shows supernatural evidence to be impossible; it shuts out light from above: the other shows natural evidence to be non-existent; it shuts out light from the world around us. The two together amount to plain and practical atheism, as far as such a belief is compatible with sanity of mind.

Of the 'Political Discourses' it would be difficult to speak in terms of too great commendation. They combine almost every excellence which can belong to such a performance. The reasoning is clear, and unincumbered with more words or more illustrations than are necessary for bringing out the doctrine. The learning is extensive, accurate, and profound, not only as to systems of philosophy, but as to history, whether modern or ancient. The subjects are most happily chosen; the language is elegant, precise, and vigorous; and so admirably are the topics selected, that there is as little of dryness in these fine essays as if the subject were not scientific; and we rise from their per-

usual scarce able to believe that it is a work of philosophy we have been reading, having all the while thought it a book of curiosity and entertainment. The great merit, however, of these discourses, is their originality, and the new system of politics and political economy which they unfold. Mr. Hume is, beyond all doubt, the author of the modern doctrines which now rule the world of science, which are to a great extent the guide of practical statesmen, and are only prevented from being applied in their fullest extent to the affairs of nations, by the clashing interests and the ignorant prejudices of certain powerful classes; for no one deserving the name of legislator pretends to doubt the soundness of the theory, although many hold that the errors of our predecessors require a slow recourse to right principle in conducting the practical business of the world. The peculiar felicity of the author in distributing his doctrines as the subjects of separate essays, whereby he avoided the repulsive forms of a treatise, and yet moulding these separate treatises into one body and one harmonious system, cannot be too much admired. We read them as different and as short works on various subjects; but we perceive at each step that we are guided by the same genius,—that one spirit of inquiry pervades the whole—one view of human society and of national interests is taken throughout—one sagacious unfolder of truth, one accurate and bold discoverer of popular error, is at work in each discourse; and it is certain that Dr. Smith's celebrated work, with all its great merits, is less of a regular system than the detached essays of Mr. Hume. The originality of the latter's opinions is wholly undeniable: they were published full fourteen years before the 'Wealth of Nations.'

As for his 'Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals,' of which he had himself formed so high an estimate, this is indeed a very excellent work, and appears well to deserve the opinion pronounced upon

it by the author, although his 'Political Discourses' may be superior in the originality and importance of their views. But the composition of the 'Inquiry' is more careful and better elaborated than that of his other philosophical writings, at the same time that it loses none of the ease or grace by which his manner is always so remarkably distinguished. There is in this treatise a copiousness and felicity of illustration rarely anywhere else to be found; and it is full of learned allusions and references, showing the various and extensive reading in which he had indulged. Nor is it the least remarkable feature of the work, that though preferred by him before all the other productions of his genius, it contains nothing at all even bordering upon sceptical opinions. On the contrary, he reprobates the selfish system of morals, and is a strenuous advocate of that which recognises the benevolent feelings, and traces human conduct to a desire of enjoying their gratification. Of utility he largely states the importance, but rather as one leading motive than as the sole source of either our actions or our judgments upon them; and assuredly both in this and the other branches of the argument a wider departure from the commonly received standard of morals may be seen in the philosophy of Paley than in that of the 'Inquiry.'

In the same year that he published the 'Political Essays,' 1752, he was appointed their librarian by the Faculty of Advocates. He obtained this place after a very severe contest, in which the utmost force of the party opposed to his known opinions was brought to bear in favour of his antagonist. The emoluments of the office were not above fifty pounds a-year; but the violence of the parties was proportioned to their zeal for and against the principles of the candidates; and I find in his unpublished letters curious indications of his anxiety for success, and of his delight at the victory which he gained, chiefly, he says, through the

assistance of the younger members of the Scottish bar and of the ladies of Edinburgh. "There is nothing," he says, in a letter to his intimate friend Dr. Clephane, then a physician in London, "since the rebellion (1745), that ever so much drew the attention of this town, except Provost Stuart's trial; and there is scarce a man whose friendship or acquaintance I could desire, who has not given me undoubted proofs of his concern and regard." His adversary was Mr. Kenneth Mackenzie, professor of civil law in the University of Edinburgh.*

Although the salary of the office which he thus obtained was inconsiderable, the situation for a literary man was very desirable. He thus had constant and easy access to an excellent library. This induced him to undertake a work which he thought much wanted, a classical history of England; but he was afraid of attempting it on so extensive a scale as to begin at the earliest period, and continue it for seventeen centuries; and he therefore confined himself at first to the Stuarts, commencing with the accession of James I., and closing with the expulsion of his grandson James II., at the revolution of 1688. This work made two volumes, of which one was published in 1754, and another in 1756. He entertained a sanguine expectation that his first volume, containing the reigns of James I. and Charles I., would have met with a favourable reception; and we find the grounds of his confidence stated in one of his letters to Dr. Clephane. His election was in February, 1752, and in the following January he must have made great progress; for he thus describes his having already consulted his friends upon his performance:—"As there is no happiness," he says, "without occupation, I have begun a work which will employ me several years,

* It is singular that a contest and a victory which once so much occupied him, and which he regarded as the battle and the triumph of his free opinions over bigotry, is not even glanced at in his 'Life' of himself.

and which yields me much satisfaction. 'Tis a history of Britain, from the union of the crowns to the present time. I have already printed the reign of King James. My friends flatter me (by this I mean that they do not flatter me) that I have succeeded. You know that there is no path of honour on the English Parnassus more vacant than that of history. Style, judgment, impartiality, ease, every thing is wanting to our historians; and even Rapin, during his latter period, is extremely deficient. I make my work very concise, after the manner of the ancients. It divides into three very moderate volumes—one to end with the death of Charles I., the second at the Revolution, the third at the Accession, 1714; for I dare come no nearer the present times. The work will neither please the Duke of Bedford nor James Frazer, but I hope it will please you and posterity."—"I was, I own," he says in his account of his life, "sanguine in my expectations of the success of this work. I thought I was the only historian that had at once neglected present power, interest, and authority, and the cry of popular prejudices; and as the subject was suited to my capacity, I expected proportionate success."

But whatever might be the want of such a work, and how much soever he relied on his superior qualifications for the task, he was doomed to a bitter disappointment. "I was assaulted," says he, "by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation. English, Scotch, and Irish, Whig and Tory, churchman and sectary, freethinker and religionist, patriot and courtier, united against the man who had presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I. and the Earl of Strafford." But the singularity of the case, and the great mortification of the author, was this: that with this universal clamour, all the storm did not save him from neglect; it subsided as quickly as it had been raised, and the 'History' sunk into ob-

livion. In a year's time, only five and forty copies were sold, at least in London; and although he tells us in another letter, that "at Edinburgh no book was ever more bought, or furnished more subject of conversation," yet in London it was otherwise. The author's discouragement was great; he was disgusted with belonging to a country so subject to the tyranny of faction and the clamours of the mob, while it boasted so constantly, and blustered so loudly, about its liberties: he even entertained serious thoughts of leaving it for ever, changing his name, and passing the rest of his days in some French provincial town, far from those braggarts and intolerant brawlers. Nor does he appear to have been deterred from this project, excepting by the obstacles to its execution which the war, breaking out immediately after, interposed. The only encouragement which he received under his disappointment was from the two Primates, Herring and Stone, who approved of the book, and sent him messages, bidding him not to be cast down by the temporary failure.

During the interval between the first and second volume appeared his 'Natural History of Religion,' which so far attracted notice, that Bishop Hurd wrote an answer to it; and about as elegantly feeble as might be expected from that moderate prelate, unless that some part of it came from the more haughty and vigorous pen of his patron Warburton, and redeemed the tract from the imputation of candour, toleration, and temper. The second volume of the 'Stuarts' "happened to give less offence to the Whigs than the first," he says, "and being therefore somewhat better received, helped to buoy up its unfortunate brother." Three years after he published the 'House of Tudor,' which containing his account of ecclesiastical matters in Elizabeth's reign, and of Queen Mary's conduct, revived the clamour raised against the first volume, and, like that, was soon neglected and forgotten. In

1761 he finished the work by publishing the two volumes containing the earlier history: "they had," he says, "tolerable, and but tolerable success." It is, however, also stated by him, as an indication of growing popularity, that all the clamour and all the neglect did not prevent the booksellers from giving him more money when they purchased the copyrights than had ever before been paid in England; so that, with his sober habits and moderate desires, he was become not only independent, but opulent. It is to be observed that, for his 'History of Scotland,' Dr. Robertson had only received 600*l.*, the publishers having cleared 6000*l.* For 'Charles V.' he received 3,600*l.*, and for 'America' 2,400*l.* (being in the same proportion), while, no doubt, 50,000*l.* at the least must have been realised by those works.

In considering the merits of the 'History of England,' we must first of all observe upon the great difference which appears between the pains bestowed upon this celebrated work and those which the rival historian was wont to bestow upon his writings. Dr. Robertson's 'Scotland,' consisting of about a volume and a half (for the rest of the second volume is composed of original documents printed as an appendix), occupied his almost undivided attention for above six years.* Hume's first volume could not have been the work of above a year or fifteen months; for it was begun when he went to the Advocates' Library early in 1752, and it was published in 1754. The second volume succeeded in 1756, but he had written half of it when the first was published; and in 1755 there appeared also his 'Natural History of Religion.' Consequently we are positively certain that he wrote more

* Though by his letter to Lord Hailes he seems only to have begun it in 1752, yet I have heard his eldest sister often say that he had a whole room full of books to read or consult for some time before at Gladsmuir, where she lived with him, and which she quitted on her marriage before 1750.

of his 'History' in less than two years than Dr. Robertson wrote of his in above six; and that his whole 'History of the Stuarts' could not have taken above three years to prepare and to write. It is impossible to doubt that this mode of writing history must leave no room for a full investigation of facts and weighing of authorities. He had no right to number "care" among the items of superiority to his predecessors, upon which he had plumed himself in his letter to Dr. Clephane. The transactions of James's time comprised perhaps the most important period of our constitutional history, because the struggle between the Crown and the Commons then began, and occupied the greater part of his reign. It was impossible to examine the period too closely, or in too minute detail. The struggle continued in Charles's time, and ended in the quarrel between the King and the people, in the usurpations of the Parliament, and in the overthrow of the Monarchy. The Commonwealth then followed, and the Cromwell usurpation. Now there is hardly one passage in all this history, from 1600 to 1650, which is not the subject of vehement controversy among parties of conflicting principles, and among inquiring men of various opinions; yet all this was examined by Mr. Hume in less than two years, and his history of it was actually composed, as well as his materials collected and his authorities investigated and compared and weighed, within that short period of time. No one can be surprised if, in so short a time allotted to the whole work, far more attention was given to the composition of the narrative than to the preparation of the materials. It was altogether impossible that, in so short a period, the duty of the historian should be diligently performed. The execution of the work answers to the mode of its performance.

But if the 'History' be not diligently prepared, is it faithfully written? There are numberless proofs of

the contrary; but we have the most express evidence in the author's own statement to prove this position. The temper in which his work was written upon all the constantly recurring points in contest between the two opposing parties may be judged of with accuracy, and towards himself with perfect justice, by the avowal which he makes respecting the alterations introduced after the first publication. "Though I had been taught," he says, "that the Whig party were in possession of bestowing all places, both in the State and in literature, I was so little inclined to yield to their senseless clamour, that in above a hundred alterations, which further study, reading, or reflection, engaged me to make in the reigns of the two first Stuarts, I have made all of them invariably to the Tory side." We have here indeed a double confession. To the first volume is confined the reign of the first two Stuarts, and to that consequently is this remarkable admission limited. Now, if that volume had been written with any "care," could subsequent reading and reflection have suggested above a hundred alterations, all admitted to be material, by the statement that they affected the complexion of the political opinions conveyed in those passages? But again, if the author's mind was in a state of impartiality when he thus finally composed his book, how could it happen that every one of his corrections should be on one side, and not a single correction on the other, unless he had written the work originally with a strong bias towards the Whig side, instead of which his bias is, on all hands, allowed to have been strongly the other way?

The 'History of the Tudors' has the same cardinal imperfection of carelessness and haste, but in a lesser degree, because he had fewer controverted points to consider, and a smaller mass of authorities to examine. He had also less temptation to give his narrative and reflections a bias from the leaning of his opinions, be-

cause, excepting the questions relating to Mary Queen of Scots, there are few passages from Henry VII. to Elizabeth the subject of much controversy between the Whig and the Tory parties. The earlier period before the Conquest, and from the Conquest to Richard III., is wholly free from questions of this description; but also it must be observed that the historian's diligence did not increase as he approached the termination of his labours; the Anglo-Saxon history is in every respect the most meagre and superficial part of the whole work. We shall afterwards see how his friends explained this inferiority (*Life of Robertson*).

The bias of Mr. Hume's mind, from which his chief partialities proceed, was the prejudice which he had conceived against Whig, and generally against popular, principles. This arose, in great part, from his contempt of vulgar errors, and his distrust of the more numerous and ignorant classes of the community, whom those errors chiefly may be supposed to affect. His acquaintance with antiquity, too, had not tended to lessen his belief of the giddiness and violence of multitudes when they interfere directly in the conduct of affairs. To these considerations must certainly be added the connexion between the Whig party in the State and the fanatical party in the Church. The Roundheads were religious bigots in his eyes, and were, in fact, deeply tinged with superstition; and they were the original of the Whigs both in England and in Scotland. The Cavaliers held cheap all such observances, regarding religious enthusiasm with mingled dislike and derision; and from them came the Tories in both parts of the island. Nor was the connexion merely genealogical or historical. As late as the times of Addison and Bolingbroke, we find the friends of the Hanoverian succession distinguished by their respect for religion, and the Jacobites chiefly giving in to the fashionable deism, or the latitudinarian principles, of Catholic countries in modern times.

A contempt of popular rights, a leaning towards power, a proneness to find all institutions already established worthy of support, a suspicion of all measures tending towards change, is thus to be seen prevailing through Mr. Hume's reflections, and influencing both his faith in historical evidence and his manner of conducting the narration of facts. A bias of the like kind is plainly perceptible in his remarks and in his recital, wherever the Church, the sects are concerned, and generally wherever religion forms the subject of either. Independent of the testimony which he has unwittingly borne against himself, in respect of his Tory partialities, the proofs of his perverting facts, especially in the last two volumes of his work, have been multiplied by the industry of succeeding historians, till the discredit of the book, as a history, has become no longer a matter of any doubt. It is of no avail that he himself and his admirers cite the disrepute and even odium into which his account of the Stuarts fell with the Jacobites, as much as with the Whigs, from its first appearance. That party's unreasonable demands upon our faith would be satisfied with nothing short of absolutely acquitting all the Stuarts of all guilt and of all indiscretion; and they probably felt more disappointed, because they were certainly more injured, by the admissions of one manifestly ranged on their side, when he was compelled to stop short of their pure and perfect creed. Afterwards the Tudor history completed their discontent: but it affords no proof whatever of his impartiality. He had, of course, far too much sense and too penetrating a sagacity to doubt the guilt of Queen Mary during the Scottish portion of her life, admitted as the greater part of the charges against her were, by her own conduct in the open profligacy of her connexion with her husband's murderer; and the prejudice which this unavoidable conviction raised in his mind, extended itself to the more doubtful question

of her accession to Babington's conspiracy, a question which he appears to have examined with much less patience of research, though it belonged to his own subject, than he had applied to the Scottish transactions of the queen, which, in their detail at least, had far less connexion with his work.

If patient investigation of the subject be a merit—and next to fidelity it is the chief merit of history—Mr. Hume's work is here most defective. The time taken to compose it sufficiently proves this, as has already been shown; but there is continual proof that he took what he found set down in former works without weighing the relative value of conflicting authorities, and generally resorted to the most accessible sources of information. There have been instances without number adduced of his inaccuracy in citing even the authorities to which he confined his researches.

Nor can we acquit him on another charge not rarely brought against him, and partaking of the two former—neglect or carelessness about the truth, and infidelity in relating it. He loved effect in his narrative, and studied it. Unmindful of the ancient critic's golden rule, "Historia tanto robustior quanto verior,"* he occasionally adorned and enlivened his page by excursions into the field, to the historian forbidden, of fancy; and either perverted or forgot the facts of the true story. Sometimes he overlooked inconsistencies in matters within his own knowledge, as when he made Charles I. be disturbed in his sleep by the erection of the scaffolding for his execution, while he is proved to have known that Charles suffered by cold in the walk across the park from St. James's, where he really slept.† As for his picturesque descrip-

* Quinct. ii. 4, 2.

† His marks are upon Lord Herbert's narrative in the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh; but he prefers citing Walker's 'History of the Independents,' which contains the false statement, although the very next

tion of sudden deaths and female miscarriages being occasioned by the execution, and of equally violent effects, produced by the Restoration, these appear to be mere fancy pieces, no authority whatever being cited to support them.

If from the cardinal virtues of fidelity, research, and accuracy, we turn to the great but secondary accomplishments of the historian, we can scarcely find expressions too strong to delineate the merit of Mr. Hume. His style is altogether to be admired. It is not surpassed by Livy himself. There is no pedantry or affectation, nothing forced or far-fetched. It flows smoothly and rapidly, according to the maxim of the critic, "Currere debet et ferri."* It seems to have the "lactea ubertas"† of Livy, with the "immortalis velocitas"‡ of Sallust. Nothing can be more narrative; the story is unbroken, it is clear, all its parts distinct, and all succeeding in natural order; nor is any reflection omitted where it should occur, or introduced where it would encumber or interrupt. In both his narrative and his descriptions there is nothing petty, or detailed more than is fit or needful; there is nothing of what painters call spotty—all is breadth and bold relief. His figures are finely grouped, and his subjects boldly massed. His story is no more like a chronicle, or his views like a catalogue of particulars, than a fine picture is like a map of the country or a copy of the subject. His language is more beautiful and powerful than correct. He has no little tendency to Gallicisms. He has many very inaccurate, some ungrammatical phrases. In this respect he is far behind Robertson. The general effect, however, of his diction is unequalled. He cannot be said to write idiomatic English, being indeed a foreigner

page mentions his coming from St. James's. The able and elaborate exposure of Mr. Hume in Mr. Brodie's truly valuable History, has finally settled the opinion of all men upon the subject.

* Quinct. ix. 4, 18. † Ib. x. 1, 32. ‡ Ib. x. 1, 102.

in that sense; but his language is often, nay, generally, racy, and he avails himself of the expressions, both the terms and the phrases, which he finds in older writers, transferring them to his own page. In this he enjoys a great advantage over Robertson, who, resorting necessarily to Latin, or to foreign or provincial authors, could not manage such transfers, and was obliged to make all undergo the digestive and assimilating process, converting the whole into his own beautiful, correct, and uniform style. Another reach of art Hume has attained, and better than any writer in our language; he has given either a new sense to expressions, or revived an old, so as never to offend us by the neology of the one process or by the archaism of the other. With this style, sustained by his profound philosophy, there can be nothing more beautiful than some of his descriptions of personal character, or of public feeling, or of manners, or of individual suffering; and like all great masters of composition, he produces his effect suddenly, and, as it were, with a single blow.

Who that has read can ever forget his account, fanciful though it be, of the effects produced on the people by Charles's death and his son's return? Or his picture of the French Ambassador at his first audience of Elizabeth, after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, proceeding "through the palace,—silence, as in the dead of night, reigning through all the chambers, and sorrow sitting on every face—the courtiers and ladies clad in deep mourning, ranged on each side, and allowing him to pass without affording him one salute or favourable look:"* Or Cromwell's state of mind when "society terrified him, surrounded by numerous, unknown, implacable enemies; solitude astonished him by withdrawing the protection necessary for his security."† Or the groups of great men who

* Chap. xl. † Chap. lxii.

subverted the monarchy, when "was celebrated the sagacity of Pym, more fitted for use than ornament; matured, not chilled by age"—when "was displayed the mighty ambition of Hampden, taught disguise, not moderation, from former constraint; sustained by courage, conducted by prudence, embellished by modesty"—when "were known the dark, ardent, and dangerous character of St. John, the impetuous spirit of Hollis, violent, open, and entire in his enmities and in his friendships; the enthusiastic genius of young Vane, extravagant in the ends which he proposed, sagacious and profound in the means which he employed, incited by the appearances of religion, negligent of the duties of morality."* These are the strokes of a master's pencil, and beauties such as these would make this the first of histories, if the grace of form could atone for the defect of substance; if the want of diligence and the transgressions against fidelity could be covered over by the magical power of diction.

The sagacious reflections and spirit of profound philosophy must not be passed over; they are another praise of this work. These rarely fail the author, whether in judging of the connection and the influence of events; or in estimating the value of conflicting accounts, where he will give himself the trouble of comparison; or in noting the errors and the merits of the policy pursued by statesmen. It is to be observed, however, that as in treating of ecclesiastical affairs he generally suffers his peculiar religious opinions to be superseded by the received principles of those rulers whose conduct he describes, and of their subjects; so does he not often obtrude his sound and enlightened views of public policy, especially of economical science, upon his reader, rather conforming himself to the vulgar errors on the subject, as when he

* Chap. lix.

speaks of the balance being for or against a commercial state. Perhaps, too, in ranking Galileo above Bacon he made the same kind of sacrifice, though certainly his disrespectful remarks on Shakspeare run counter to the critical faith commonly received in England; and the contempt with which he treats the political writings of Locke and Sidney in his concluding chapter is a sacrifice of his own taste as well as of his reader's feelings to the prejudices of his party.

It must be added—because great mistakes have been committed in this matter—that though the whole work was written in too short a time to give an opportunity for investigating the subject, yet the composition was exceedingly careful, and anything rather than hasty. He is represented as having written with such ease that he hardly ever corrected. Even Mr. Stewart has fallen into this error;* and Mr. Gibbon commends as a thing admitted the "careless, inimitable beauties" of Hume's style. It was exactly the reverse, of which evidence remains admitting of no doubt and no appeal. His manuscript of the reigns before that of Henry VI., written after the 'History of the Stuarts and the Tudors,' is still extant, and bears marks of composition anxiously laboured, words being written and scored out, and even several times changed, until he could find the expression to his mind. The manuscript of his 'Dialogues' also remains, and is written in the same manner. Nay, his very letters appear by this test to have been the result of care and labour. The maxim of Quinctilian—"Quæramus optimum, nec protinus offerentibus gaudeamus"—seems always to have been his rule as to words; and his own testimony to the same effect is to be found in a letter which I have obtained.† Certainly it would have been well if he had not adopted the opposite principle as to facts and authorities. It is remarkable, however, that he hesi-

* Life of A. Smith. † See Appendix.

tated much as to the subject he should choose for his historical labours, and more strange still that he should have balanced between England and the Church. From this he was dissuaded chiefly by the strong recommendations of Adam Smith and Sir Gilbert Elliott. I have this fact upon the authority of Dr. Robertson, who, in relating it to the late Lord Meadowbank, added, "It would, at any rate, have suited me had he adhered to the plan he himself proposed, as the 'History of England' would have thus been left open, which fell in with an early plan of my own."

After the publication of his 'History' was closed in 1761, being now fifty years old, and possessed of an ample competency, Mr. Hume resolved, he tells us, "never more to set his foot out of his native country, enjoying the satisfaction of never having asked a favour, or made advances to any great man's acquaintance." In less than two years, however, a great man's repeated solicitation to him changed his plan of life; and he accompanied Lord Hertford, the British Ambassador, to Paris, with the immediate prospect of being appointed Secretary of Embassy. This was realized; and in 1765, when the Ambassador went to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant, the philosopher was for part of the year chargé d'affaires. His station, his agreeable manners, but above all his philosophical, including his irreligious, fame, were well suited to make a deep impression upon the society of the Paris circles. He was as popular among the wits, the philosophers, the coteries, and the women, as Franklin was at a later period, when his name was given to articles of fashionable attire. One of his letters gives an amusing account of the Dauphin, afterwards Louis XVI., then a child, having paid him court at his presentation, by speaking familiarly of his works, and of his younger brother, afterwards Louis XVIII., having followed in the same complimentary strain. The charms, however, of such society as Paris then presented, the elegance of the

manners, the easy good humour of the inhabitants, the freedom from all coarse dissipation, and, above all, from factious brawls, naturally made a pleasing contrast with that which he had left behind him at home. There certainly was nothing in this country more alien to his nature, and less suited to his taste, than our political violence; and the intolerance of our religious feelings, as well as the rudeness of our manners, he had some right to complain of, when a man like Dr. Johnson could be found to roar out "No, Sir!" in his presence, on being asked by a common friend to let him present the Historian to the Moralist. Upon a subsequent occasion the same intolerant believer behaved with marked insolence to Dr. Smith,* as good a Christian as himself, and a man of purer moral life, merely because he had, while afflicted with Mr. Hume's recent death, vented his grief in a touching panegyric upon his undoubtedly profound wisdom, and his virtue free from all reproach. This model of bigotry and rudeness had, notwithstanding, met at dinner, with perfect satisfaction, and conversed for hours, with Wilkes, whose life was as abandoned as his faith was scanty, who had been convicted of blasphemy and obscenity in a court of justice, and who held in bitter scorn every one of the sturdy moralist's religious and political principles. But Wilkes was English, Hume Scotch. From the country of the Johnsons, the latter deemed that he had made a happy escape, when he found himself among the gay, the polite, the tolerant French; and he remained there happy, and respected, and beloved, till 1766, when he was diverted from his project of settling in Paris for the rest of his life, by being appointed Under-Secretary of State in General Conway's ministry, who was Lord Hertford's brother. He held that office for about two years, and in 1769 returned to Edinburgh with an income of a thousand

* See Life of Johnson, vol. ii.

a-year, the produce of his own honest industry, "healthy," as he says, "but somewhat stricken in years, with the prospect before him of long enjoying his ease, and of seeing his reputation increase."

During the first few months of his residence at Paris he was not Private Secretary, as he tells one of his correspondents whom he chides for making that mistake, as will be seen in the Appendix; and he adds that he performed all the duties of the Secretary of Embassy, Sir Charles Bunbury, who was the brother-in-law of Lord Holland and the Duke of Richmond, and who, being thus protected, did nothing beyond receiving the salary. Lord Hertford, however, exerted his influence to obtain Mr. Hume's appointment in the room of Sir Charles; and Marshal Conway being Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he prevailed over Sir Charles's family interest. Mr. Hume was appointed 2d July, 1765; and, on Lord Hertford's being removed immediately after to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant, he became Chargé d'Affaires until the Duke of Richmond's arrival as Ambassador in the month of October. By Lord Aberdeen's kindness I have been allowed to examine the correspondence of the Embassy with Marshal Conway during these four months; and it is highly creditable to the philosopher's business-like talents, and his capacity for affairs. The negotiations of which he had the sole conduct related to the important and interesting discussions respecting Canada; to matters arising out of the cession by the Peace of Paris; and to the demolition of the works at Dunkirk, also stipulated by that treaty. His dispatches, some of them of great length, most of them in his own hand, are clearly and ably written. The course which he describes himself as pursuing with the very slippery and evasive ministers against whom he had to contend, particularly the Duc de Praslin, appears to have been marked by firmness and temper, as well as by quickness and sagacity. His memorials, of which two or three are given, show

a perfect familiarity with diplomatic modes and habits, and they are both well written and ably reasoned. His information must have been correct; for he obtained a knowledge of the secret proceedings of the Assembly of Clergy, which, though convoked for the purpose of obtaining the usual *don gratuit*, chose to enter upon the discussion of all the clerical grievances, while they kept their deliberations carefully secret, and were opposed by the Parliament of Paris as soon as their proceedings became known. Mr. Hume obtained a very early though somewhat exaggerated account of these things through two of the foreign ambassadors; and when he communicated it to the Bishop of Senlis, he was treated with contempt, as if nothing could be so wild, and as if some enemy of the Church had invented the fable to discredit her. Marshal Conway appears by his dispatches (which are also excellent) to have rested his hopes of these differences passing off on the prevailing irreligious spirit in France, where "the Dauphin alone," he says, "has any care for such matters; and he has of late taken a military turn." In a short time the whole ferment was allayed by the prudent and able conduct of Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse; the *don gratuit* was voted; and the Assembly was prorogued to the following May. Mr. Hume praises Brienne very highly on this, as indeed he did on all occasions. In John Home's Journal of his excursion with the historian to Bath, in his last illness (1776), we find the same opinion expressed; Hume considering him as the only man in France fit to be minister, and relating several instances of his great ability.* It was the same prelate, thus highly commended, who proved so insufficient to meet the tempest of the Revolution, when, twelve years later, he was placed in the situation for which the partiality of the historian had early predicted his exclusive fitness.†

* Mackenzie's Life of John Home, p. 170.

† One writer has taken upon him to decide against Mr. Hume's talents

While Mr. Hume lived in Paris, he was applied to by some friends of Rousseau, who had become tired of his fantastic plans of solitude in Switzerland, and who was doubtful of his reception in French society, as others naturally were of his power to demean himself so as to make himself bearable in it; and intending shortly to remove from France, and settle in England, he expressed his readiness to take charge of the "interesting solitary," as he was called, whose writings he admired in common with the rest of the world. He wrote to Rousseau, and offered to make him over to England; the offer was immediately accepted, with the warmest expressions of gratitude. He came to Paris, on a permission of the Government to pass through France, notwithstanding the decree of arrest still in force against him. On his arrival, in December, 1765, he chose to parade himself daily in the neighbourhood of his hotel, in his ridiculous Armenian dress. The insolence of this proceeding in a person only by sufferance at large, made the police intimate that he must leave the country; and he accompanied Mr. Hume to London, at the beginning of January. He does not deny that he was treated with the utmost kindness, and that every thing was done which friendship could devise to render his stay in London and its neighbourhood agreeable. Mr. Hume then, finding that he was resolved to live at a distance from society, and had intended going into Wales, introduced him to Mr. Davenport,* who kindly offered him the use of

for public business, certainly in perfect ignorance of the subject. After saying that it would be superfluous to inquire in what manner he executed the duties of his office as Under-Secretary, he adds, "Certain it is that the state papers of those times evince no extraordinary marks of splendid abilities" (Ritchie's Life of Hume, p. 281); as if the Under-Secretary of State had any connexion with these papers—or as if this writer had carefully examined them, when he had just said the inquiry would be superfluous! But he who so discharged the similar—nay, the same duties of Ambassador, must have acted with equal ability as Foreign Under Secretary.

* Grandfather of Lady Williams, wife of Mr. Justice Williams.

his house at Wootton, in Derbyshire. The silly, misplaced pride of the poor man would not suffer him to accept this without paying an equivalent; and he was allowed to sit at an almost nominal rent of thirty pounds.

He went to Wootton about the 20th of March, 1766. His letters to Mr. Hume, of the 22nd and 29th, are full of gratitude and affection, though he had seen three weeks before the supposed letter of Frederick II.; for he speaks of it to his friend De Peyron, 11th March; and he says, that on asking Hume if it was Horace Walpole's, "he neither said yes nor no," a silence afterwards made one of his charges against Hume. On the 5th of April he writes to Madame de Boufflers, still full of gratitude to Mr. Hume, who, he says, had obtained for him the comfort and pleasure of his retreat in Derbyshire. Two days after, 7th April, he writes to a friend not named, and sends a contradiction of Frederick's letter to a newspaper: Rousseau's letter speaks of secret enemies, under the "mask of perfidious friendship, seeking to dishonour him;" and on the 9th he writes his accusation of Mr. Hume to Madame de Boufflers, so that it is clear he had all at once, between the 5th and 7th, by exciting his warm and feverish imagination, suddenly broke with his benefactor and "dear patron," as he before called him. His proofs of the conspiracy, and of Mr. Hume's secret enmity, are truly the workings of a sick brain, and sick with vanity; as appears, among other symptoms, from his declaring how happy it made him to observe the popularity Hume had gained at Paris by his kindness to Rousseau; and as also appears, by his roundly asserting that his own popularity and following in England was extraordinary, until this plot was concocted to decry him. The letter is at the bottom of it all.* He at once pronounced

* See these letters in Œuv. vol. vii. p. 138, 139, 148, et seq.

that he knew it from its style to be D'Alembert's, and was enraged when told that it was certainly written by Horace Walpole—"as if," said he, "it were possible I could mistake D'Alembert's style, and imagine an Englishman's French to be his." Then D'Alembert was a friend of Hume's; and though D'Alembert had no more to do with the joke than Rousseau himself, this was made the foundation of a quarrel; for not only was D'Alembert Hume's friend, but a M. Tronchin was Hume's landlord, whose father had slandered Rousseau at Geneva; and others of his enemies, real or supposed, turned out to be Hume's friends also. Thus was, he gravely asserts, a clear case of conspiracy made out against Hume, who must have inveigled him over to England in order to ruin his reputation. One of the overt acts of this plot was the obtaining, through General Conway, a pension for him who was starving, of a hundred a-year. But it is to be remarked, that the only part of the whole statement which he at once willingly disbelieved, although it was the only part that had a real foundation, was Hume's helping him to the pension. Therefore, having in the heroics of his first indignation thrown it up, he at once offered afterwards to take it back, and complained of the whole arrears not having been paid.

Mr. Hume hearing that this frantic creature was writing constantly to Paris complaints of being deceived and persecuted by him, wrote to desire he would specify his grounds; and then came a letter, full of the most ridiculous charges, ascribing to Mr. Hume's most indifferent acts, even to his looks, the blackest designs; a letter plainly proving that the writer was deranged in one region of his mind, and that vanity was, if not the main cause of his malady, certainly the pivot on which it turned. No one can read that letter without a feeling of indignation; for it shows throughout quite reason enough to make its writer answerable for his pure selfishness and his un-

bearable suspicions. It is a source, too, of irritation to the reader, that of the many persons whom he called in as arbitrators, by sending them copies of his favourite production, not any one appears to have had the manly firmness, the true and rational friendship for Rousseau himself, of at once plainly declaring, what all of them must needs have felt when they read it, that the whole was a fiction of the man's own brain. Lord Marischal seems, indeed, to have perceived that any communication with such a creature was unsafe; and he let him know that henceforth they must no longer correspond. But for this notice, he no doubt would have been the plotter of the next conspiracy; for Rousseau had for some years desired to consider him as a father, and always addressed him, a steady old soldier and political intriguer wholly void of any sentimental propensities beyond those of common-place men of the world, by that endearing and ridiculous title, although he held on religious subjects the opinions most reprobated by Rousseau.*

It is known that Rousseau, a year or two after his return to France, admitted that the foggy climate of England had produced in him a mental affection, and that he had been to blame in his quarrel with Hume;† but he never had the common fairness and gratitude to address this confession to his benefactor, or to any of those whose ears he had sought to poison with his malignant slanders.

Contrary to his invariable practice, when attacked for his writings, Mr. Hume very unadvisedly gave

* Lord Marischal belonged to the D'Holbach sect, which Rousseau held in the greatest abhorrence, and which complained of Voltaire as too religious. So Lord M. used, with Helvetius, "to laugh at Hume for his narrow way of thinking" on these subjects. Letter of Hume, 10th Feb., 1773. (Hill Burton, II. 465.) Lord M. was an agreeable member of society, and in great favour not only with Frederick II. but with all the D'Holbach circle.

† See Bernardin de St. Pierre's statement of his conversation (L'Arcadie, Préambule), or Appendix aux Confessions, Œuv. vol. i. p. 642. The passage is given in the Life of Rousseau, which immediately precedes the present piece.

himself the trouble, and underwent the anxiety, of writing an answer to this silly and malignant individual. He published a short but detailed statement of all that had passed between them. This step he took contrary to the earnest advice of Adam Smith, whose letter remains, strongly dissuading him from taking any notice of Rousseau's slanders. He appears to have been overpowered by D'Alembert and D'Holbach, who, living in the gossip and slander-loving credulity of Paris society, were afraid lest Rousseau's constant letter writing might produce an effect unfavourable to their friend. Certain it is, that Hume's publication, wholly superfluous to all men of ordinary sense and common candour, was insufficient to convince such ill-natured and silly people as the Deffands and their flatterers, who were anxious to have a pretext for levelling their malice at the Englishman and the philosopher; and though despising Rousseau from the bottom of their hearts, were willing enough to make his fancied grievances a cloak for their attacks upon Mr. Hume. It seems plain that his own subsequent reflection upon the matter brought him over to Mr. Smith's opinion: for in the sketch which he has left of his own life, he makes not the least allusion to his quarrel with Rousseau, although, in his pamphlet, he says that it gave him more trouble and annoyance than any thing that had ever happened to him.

Mr. Hume returned to Edinburgh in 1766, but early next year he was appointed Under-Secretary of State under Marshal Conway, and held that office above a year. In 1769, some time after he resigned it, he returned to Edinburgh, and took a house in the only part of the new town then built, St. Andrew's Square. With the exception of a journey to Harrowgate for his health, and another to Bath the year he died, he lived in his native country during the remainder of his life, enjoying the constant society of

his old friends; and himself the delight of their circles by his abundant spirits, his never-failing good-humour, and even temper, and the kindness as well as the uprightness of his character. In the spring of 1775, he tells us, he was seized with a disease in his bowels. "At first," he says, "it gave me no alarm, but has since, as I apprehend it, become mortal and incurable. I now," adds the philosopher, "reckon on a speedy dissolution. I have suffered very little pain from my disorder, and what is more strange, have, notwithstanding the great decline of my person, never suffered a moment's abatement of my spirits; insomuch that, were I to name the period of my life which I should most choose to pass over again, I might be tempted to point to this latter period. I possess the same ardour as ever in study, and the same gaiety in company. I consider, besides, that a man of sixty-five, by dying, cuts off only a few years of infirmities; and though I see many symptoms of my literary reputation breaking out at last with additional lustre, I could have but few years to enjoy it. It is difficult to be more detached from life than I am at present."

While he continued to decline by a gradual exhaustion, he continued to see his friends about him as usual, and his gaiety was never clouded by the prospect before him now drawing to a close. A few weeks before his death, when there were dining with him two or three of his intimate companions, one of them, Dr. Smith, happening to complain of the world as spiteful and ill-natured, "No, no," said Mr. Hume, "here am I, who have written on all sorts of subjects calculated to excite hostility, moral, political, and religious, and yet I have no enemies; except, indeed, all the Whigs, all the Tories, and all the Christians."

When his strength gradually failed, he was unable to remain so long as before in the company of his friends. By degrees he became confined to his room the greater part of the day, and at last altogether.

But his intellect and his calmness continued to the last. A letter to Madame de Boufflers remains, written only five days before his death, and occasioned by the decease of the Prince de Conti, her great friend. "I am," he says, "certainly within a few weeks, and perhaps a few days, of my own death; yet I cannot help being struck with the Prince's, as a great loss in every particular."—"I see death," he adds, "approaching gradually, without anxiety or regret. I salute you with great affection and regard, for the last time." This was written on the 20th of August; on the 25th he was no more. On that day he gently expired without a struggle, in the sixty-fifth year of his age. He was buried in the cemetery on the Calton Hill, where a conspicuous monument is erected to his memory.

He had shown a feverish anxiety for the publication of one work, his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion;' and he left this with his other manuscripts to Dr. Smith; but giving positive injunctions to publish this work, and allowing no discretion whatever upon the subject. Nay, he left a legacy of two hundred pounds to be paid on the publication, though all the other legacies were made payable at the first term after his death: that is, Whitsuntide or Martinmas, according to the prevailing habit of the Scotch in their money arrangements. Smith refused to publish them; and there exists a curious correspondence between him and Mr. Hume of Ninewells, the philosopher's brother, on the subject. Smith, about the same time, stopped a publication of all the 'Essays,' which included one on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' and another, both believed to be spurious. The 'Dialogues' were so much corrected in his own hand, that they appear as if wholly re-written: a specimen of this is given in the Appendix. His nephew, afterwards Mr. Baron Hume, published them in 1779.

Having spoken of his writings at large, it remains

to add that, though respecting these men may form various opinions, and especially respecting his philosophical works, of his character as a man there never was, nor could there be, but one. His great capacity all admit; his genius for metaphysical inquiries, those who most differ with him, even those who most lament the use to which he directed it, confess to have been of the highest order—at once bold, penetrating, original. His talents for political speculation were of as brilliant a description, and were so admirably and so usefully applied, that his works are as yet unrivalled in that most important department of practical science; and he may justly be deemed the father of the liberal, enlightened, and rational system of national polity which has the general approval of statesmen, and would be everywhere adopted but for conflicting interests, and popular ignorance.

But universal as is the assent to these positions, the judgment is no less unanimous which must be pronounced upon his character as a member of society, unless we reject all the testimony of all his contemporaries, supported as it is by the tone and spirit of all his correspondence which has come down to us. He was a man of perfectly honest and single heart, of the kindest nature, of unequalled good-humour in the intercourse of society, carrying the same placid disposition into those controversies which are most apt to ruffle or to sour the temper; and even under disappointments which would have embittered the existence of most men, and disheartened almost all, neither losing his general good will towards others, nor suffering himself to be cast down. The party violence and delusions to which the failure of his 'History' was in part owing, he often has exposed, but certainly in no other terms than he would have used had his work succeeded: for he employed the same language in writing the portion first published at a time when he made sure of its success: and he

never afterwards troubled himself with doing more than uttering a good-humoured exclamation, or, perhaps, passing a joke at the expense of those who make themselves the tools of others by being the slaves to their own factious prejudices or propensities. But the reception of the 'History' was not his only disappointment, though it was the most severe. It would not be easy to find any instance of conduct more truly worthy of a philosopher than his bearing up against the repeated failures of the works he most esteemed, and the mortifying neglect which at first all his writings experienced, with but one exception. He looked steadily forward, with a confidence truly surprising and amply justified by the event, to the time when, probably after his course was run, his fame would shine out with surpassing lustre. Even in his latter hours, when he had, in some measure, seen the failure of the injustice under which he originally suffered, he retained a confident belief that his renown had not yet nearly reached its highest pitch; and that most admirable passage above cited from his 'Life,' written a few weeks before his death, makes a touching reference to the prospects which then cheered him, but which he knew were never, while he lived, to be realized. They were the only prospects, unhappily for him, which shed light around his dying couch; yet such was the truly admirable temper of his mind, that no believer could possess his spirit in more tranquil peace, in contemplation of the end which he saw fast approaching, nor meet his last hour with more cheerful resignation.

It is to be observed that the charges made against Mr. Hume for his sceptical writings, and for the irreligious doctrines which he published to the world, are in almost every respect ill-founded. He never had recourse to ribaldry, hardly ever invoked the aid even of wit to his argument. He had well examined the subject of his inquiries. He had, with some bias in

favour of the singularity or the originality of the conclusions to which they led, been conducted thither by reasoning, and firmly believed all he wrote. It may be a question, whether his duty required him to make public the results of his speculations, when these tended to unsettle established faith, and might destroy one system of belief without putting another in its place. Yet if we suppose him to have been sincerely convinced that men were living in error and in darkness, it is not very easy to deny even the duty of endeavouring to enlighten them, and to reclaim. But it is impossible to doubt that, with his opinions, even if justified in suppressing them, he never would have stood excused had he done anything to countenance and uphold what he firmly believed to be errors on the most important of all questions. Nor is it less manifest that he was justified in giving his own opinions to the world on those questions if he chose, provided he handled them with decorum, and with the respect due from all good citizens to the religious opinions of the State. There are but one or two passages in them all, chiefly in the 'Essay on Miracles,' which do not preserve the most unbroken gravity, and all the seriousness befitting the subject.

In his familiar correspondence he was a little less precise, though even here he was very far from resembling the Voltaire school. In his conversation he seldom alluded to the subject, but occasionally his opinions were perceivable. Thus, when one of the University, the late Mr. John Bruce, professor of logic, asked him to revise the syllabus of his lectures, he went over the proof-sheets with him; and on coming to the section entitled 'Proofs of the Existence of the Deity,' Mr. Hume said, "Right; very well." But the next section was entitled 'Proof of the Unity of the Deity,' and then he cried out, "Stop, John, stop; who told you whether there were *ane* or *mair*?" The same professor met him one day

on the staircase of the College Library, where the inscription "*Christo et Musis has ædes sacrarunt cives Edinenses*" drew from the unbeliever an irreverent observation on the junction which the piety rather than the classical purity of the good town had made between the worship of the heathen and our own.

That his conversation, however, was habitually free from all irreverent allusion, there can be no more complete proof than his uninterrupted intimacy with a man who never would have tolerated the least deviation from perfect decorum in that particular, Dr. Robertson. The reflection which naturally arises from their friendship is first, that so venerable an authority has pronounced in favour of his friend's conduct; that he never deemed his writings an offence against even the ecclesiastical laws of his country, much less against good morals; that he regarded those speculations which he the least approved and the most lamented, as justified by their author's honest sincerity of purpose; and that he considered the conduct of his argument as liable to no reprobation even from himself, a sincere believer, a pious Christian, a leading Presbyter of a Church whose discipline is peculiarly strict, a man above almost all other men regardful of decorum in his own demeanour, professional and private. It is another reflection, suggested by the same fact, that such bigots as Dr. Johnson are exposed to our reprobation, almost to our contempt, for being unable to bear the presence of a man with whom Robertson deigned, and even loved, to associate. Assuredly the English layman had not a more pious disposition than the Scottish divine; the historian of the Reformation had rendered as valuable service to the cause of religion as the essayist. The man who had passed his nights with Savage in the haunts of dissipation, and whom a dinner could tempt to sit for hours by Wilkes, might well submit to the society of a man through his

whole life as pure in morals, as blameless in conduct, as those others were profligate and abandoned. But Robertson's faith was founded on reason and inquiry, not built upon the blind devotion to established usages; and his piety, while charity tempered it, was warmed at the genial fire of a learned and inquiring philosophy, and proceeded from his reason, not like the dogmatical zeal of Johnson, inspired by fierce passions, matured by hypochondriacal temperament, stimulated by nervous fears. The one could give a reason for the faith that was in him—the other believed upon trust; the one believed because he could argue—the other because he was afraid; the one grounded his religion upon his learning—the other upon his wishes and his temper. The intolerant layman seemed to betray in his demeanour his soreness, in his horror of discussion a lurking suspicion that all was not sound in the groundwork of his system. The tolerant and philosophic divine showed a manly confidence in the solidity of the altar at which he ministered. While Johnson was enraged at the foundations of his ill-understood, unexamined belief being scrutinized for fear they should be shaken, Robertson, who well comprehended on what his faith rested, defied the utmost inquiry and most active efforts of his adversaries, well assured that out of the conflict, however fiercely sustained, the system to which he was attached, because he understood it, must come with new claims to universal acceptation.

APPENDIX.

I HAVE been favoured with some unpublished letters of Mr. Hume by the kindness of my learned kinsman Lord Meadowbank and other friends. By the following part of a letter to Dr. Clephane, we may perceive that he had once, at least, gone out of his line, and attempted something purely fanciful, apparently in verse. From the sample of his imaginative writing in the Essays, the 'Epicurean' especially, little room is left for lamenting that he did not further pursue this deviation from his appointed walk. The letter is dated 18th February, 1751. His low estimate of Shakspeare breaks out in this letter; but he became convinced in the sequel, that his kinsman's tragedy, 'Douglas,' to which he alludes, deserved the success which he justly predicts; for we find him afterwards, to the same friend, giving his opinion, after reading the tragedy, and he terms it "a singular as well as fine performance, steering clear of the spirit of the English theatre, not devoid of Attic and French elegance." He seems to have formed a very low estimate of the English genius in those days; for, speaking of Lord Lyttelton's 'Henry III.,' which he hears is to be in three quarto volumes, he exclaims, "O magnum, horrible, et sacrum libellum!—the last epithet probably applicable to it in more senses than one"—and adds, "however, it cannot well fail to be readable, which is a great deal for an English book now-a-days."

"NINEWELLS, near Berwick, 18th February, 1751.

. . . "But since I am in the humour of displaying my wit, I must tell you that lately, at our idle hours, I wrote a sheet called the 'Bellman's Petition,' wherein (if I be not partial, which I certainly am) there was great pleasantry and satire. The printers in Edinburgh refused to print it (a good sign, you'll say, of my prudence and discretion). Mr. Mure, the member, has a copy of it: ask it of him if you meet with him, or bid the Colonel, who sees him every day in the house, ask it; and, if you like it, read it to the

General, and then return it. I will not boast, for I have no manner of vanity. But when I think of the present dulness of London, I cannot forbear exclaiming, 'Rome n'est pas dans Rome: c'est partout où je suis.'

"A namesake of mine has wrote a tragedy, which he expects to come on this winter. I have not seen it, but some people commend it much. It is very likely to meet with success, and not to deserve it; for the author tells me he is a great admirer of Shakspeare, and never read Racine.

"If you answer this any time within the twelvemonth, it is sufficient; and I promise not to answer your next at less than six months' interval. And so, as the Germans say, 'Je me recomante à fos crâces.'

"Yours,

"DAVID HUME."

The following, to the same correspondent, gives an account of his establishment after his election as librarian:—

"EDINBURGH, 5th February, 1752.

"I must now set you an example and speak of myself; by this I mean that you are to speak to me of yourself. I shall exult and triumph to you a little that I have now at last, being turned of forty, to my honour, to that of learning, and to that of the present age, arrived at the dignity of being a householder. About seven months ago I got a house of my own, and completed a regular family, consisting of a head, viz. myself, and two inferior members, a maid and a cat. My sister has since joined me, and keeps me company. With frugality I can reach, I find, cleanliness, warmth, light, plenty, and contentment. What would you have more? Independence? I have it in a supreme degree. Honour? That is not altogether wanting. Grace? That will come in time. A wife? That is none of the indispensable requisites of life. Books? That is one of them, and I have more than I can use. In short, I cannot find any blessing of consequence that I am not possessed of in a greater or less degree; and without any great effort of philosophy, I may be easy and satisfied.

"As there is no happiness without occupation, I have begun a work which will employ me several years, and which yields me much satisfaction."

The following is his letter introducing the future Chancellor, then a young man of twenty, going for the first time to London, which he visited before he was admitted an advocate in Scotland:—

"DEAR DOCTOR, "EDINBURGH, 6th March, 1753.

"This is delivered to you by my friend Mr. Wedderburn, who makes a jaunt to London, partly with a view to study, partly to entertainment. I thought I could not do him a better office, nor more suitable to both these purposes, than to recommend him to the friendship and acquaintance of a man of learning and conversation. He is young;

'Mais dans les âmes bien nées
La vertu n'attend point le nombre des années.'

"It will be a great obligation both to him and me if you give him encouragement to see you frequently; and after that, I doubt not but you will think that you owe me an obligation,

'Ha in giovanile corpo senile senno.'

But I will say no more of him, lest my letter fall into the same fault which may be remarked in his behaviour and his conduct in life—the only fault which has been remarked in them—that of promising so much that it will be difficult for him to support it. You will allow that he must have been guilty of some error of this kind when I tell you, that the man with whose friendship and company I have thought myself very much favoured, and whom I recommend to you as a friend and a companion, is just twenty.

"I am, dear Doctor,
"Your affectionate friend and servant,
"Dr. Clephane." "DAVID HUME."

There is a long letter to Dr. Clephane anxiously desiring his opinion upon the true causes of his 'History' having so entirely failed, and indicating his own notion that this was owing to his freedom in treating religious and ecclesiastical subjects, but expressing his surprise that such a tone should not rather have recommended his book to the favour of one class and the hostility of another, than have made it sink into oblivion and neglect. In a letter to Colonel Edmon-

stone he treats the same disappointment in a more jocose manner, indicating what he conceives to be the taste of the public, and their fondness for worthless writings.

"EDINBURGH, 25th September, 1757.

"I am engaged in writing a new volume of history from the beginning of Henry VII. till the accession of James I. It will probably be published in the winter after next. I believe I shall write no more history, but proceed directly to attack the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and the Single Catechism, and to recommend suicide and adultery, and persist until it shall please the Lord to take me to himself. "Yours ever,

"D. H."

TO ANDREW MILLAR, the Bookseller.

"12th April, 1755.

"The second volume of my 'History' I can easily find a way of conveying to you, when finished, and corrected, and fairly copied. Perhaps I may be in London myself about that time. I have always said to all my acquaintance, that if the first volume bore a little of a Tory aspect, the second would probably be as grateful to the opposite party. The two first princes of the House of Stuart were certainly more excusable than the two second. The constitution was in their time very ambiguous and undetermined, and their parliaments were in many respects refractory and obdurate. But Charles the Second knew that he had succeeded to a very limited monarchy. His Long Parliament was indulgent to him, and even consisted almost entirely of Royalists, yet he could not be quiet nor contented with a legal authority. I need not mention the oppressions in Scotland, nor the absurd conduct of King James the Second: these are obvious and glaring points. Upon the whole, I wish the two volumes had been published together; neither one party nor the other would in that case have had the least pretext for reproaching me with partiality.

"I shall give no further umbrage to the godly; though I am far from thinking that my liberties on that head have been the real cause of checking the sale of the first volume:

they might afford a pretence for decrying it to those who were resolved, on other accounts, to lay hold of pretexts.

"Pray tell Dr. Birch, if you have occasion to see him, that his story of the warrant for Lord Loudon's execution, though at first I thought it highly improbable, appears to me at present a great deal more likely. I find the same story in Scotstarvet's 'Staggering State,' which was published here a few months ago. The same story, coming from different channels, without any dependence on each other, bears a strong air of probability. I have spoke to Duke Hamilton, who says I shall be very welcome to peruse all his papers. I shall take the first opportunity of going to the bottom of that affair; and if I find any confirmation of the suspicion, will be sure to inform Dr. Birch. I own it is the strongest instance of any which history affords of King Charles's arbitrary principles.

"I have made a trial of 'Plutarch,' and find that I take pleasure in it, but cannot yet form so just a notion of the time and pains which it will require, as to tell you what sum of money I would think an equivalent. But I shall be sure to inform you as soon as I come to a resolution. The notes requisite will not be numerous, nor so many as in the former edition. I think so bulky a book ought to be swelled as little as possible, and nothing added but what is absolutely requisite. The little trial I have made convinces me that the undertaking will require time. My manner of composing is slow, and I have great difficulty to satisfy myself."

The conclusion of this letter is extremely interesting, as proving the truth of the assertion in the 'Life' respecting his careful and deliberate manner of composing. This Appendix gives further proofs from the MS. of his Works.

To Andrew Millar.

"Edinburgh, 22nd September, 1756.

"Mr. Strachan in a few days will have finished the printing this volume; and I hope you will find leisure before the hurry of winter to peruse it, and to write me your remarks

on it. I fancy you will publish about the middle of November. I must desire you to take the trouble of distributing a few copies to my friends in London, and of sending me a few copies here; the whole will be fifteen copies.

"Notwithstanding Mr. Mallet's impertinence in not answering my letter (for it deserves no better a name), if you can engage him, from yourself, to mark, on the perusal, such slips of language as he thinks I have fallen into in this volume, it will be a great obligation to me: I mean that I shall lie under an obligation to you; for I would not willingly owe any to him.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your most humble Servant,

"DAVID HUME."

TO ANDREW MILLAR.

"DEAR SIR, 1758 or 1759.

"I am very glad that Mr. Robertson is entering on terms with you. It was, indeed, my advice to him, when he set out for London, that he should think of no other body; and I ventured to assure him that he would find your way of dealing frank, and open, and generous. He read me part of his 'History;' and I had an opportunity of reading another part of it in manuscript about a twelvemonth ago. Upon the whole, my expectations, both from what I saw, and from my knowledge of the author, are very much raised, and I consider it as a work of uncommon merit. I know that he has employed himself with great diligence and care in collecting the facts. His style is lively and entertaining, and he judges with temper and candour. He is a man generally known and esteemed in this country; and we look upon him very deservedly as inferior to nobody in capacity and learning. Hamilton and Balfour have offered him a very unusual price,—no less than five hundred pounds for an edition of two thousand; but I own that I should be better pleased to see him in your hands. I only inform you of the fact, that you may see how high the general expectations are of Mr. Robertson's performance. It will have a quick sale in this country, from the character of the author; and in England, from the merit of the work, as soon as it is known.

"Some part of the subject is common with mine; but as his work is a History of Scotland, mine of England, we do not interfere; and it will rather be an amusement to the reader to compare our method of treating the same subject. I give you thanks, however, for your attention in asking my opinion."

It is not without some reluctance that I add the following letter, because it is likely to give an unfavourable and also an unfair impression of the writer's principles. But let it be remembered that he sincerely believed in the unhappy dogmas of infidelity, and consequently held the whole subject of religious opinions cheap. To have done so in public would have been exceedingly blameable; in private, it seemed to his mind a necessary consequence of his indifference or contempt, that he should fall into the lax morality of the ancients on this point, and give an exoterical conformity to what he esoterically disbelieved. In my very clear opinion this course is wholly repugnant to sound morals; and is to be reprobated, whether in the excess to which Mr. Hume carried it, or in the lesser degree to which such reasoners as Dr. Paley have adopted it. The suppression of such a letter would have appeared inconsistent with the plan of writing Mr Hume's life historically, and not merely composing a panegyric upon him.

To Colonel Edmonstone.

"Dear Edmonstone, Not dated, but supposed, 1764.

"I was just projecting to write a long letter to you, and another to Mr. V., when your last obliging epistle came to hand. I immediately put pen to paper to assure you that the report is entirely groundless, and that I have not lost, nor ever could have lost, a shilling by Fairholm's bankruptcy. Poor John Adams is very deeply engaged with him; but I had a letter last post from Dr. Blair which informs me that he will yet be able to save fifteen or sixteen thousand pounds. I am glad to give you also this piece of intelligence.

"What—do you know that Lord Bute is again all-powerful?—or rather that he was always so, but is now acknowledged for such by all the world? Let this be a

new motive for Mr. V. to adhere to the ecclesiastical profession, in which he may have so good a patron, for civil employments for men of letters can scarcely be found. All is occupied by men of business, or by Parliamentary interest. It is putting too great a respect on the vulgar, and on their superstitions, to pique oneself on sincerity with regard to them. Did ever one make it a point of honour to speak truth to children or madmen? If the thing were worthy being treated gravely, I should tell him that the Pythian oracle, with the approbation of Xenophon, advised every one to worship the Gods νομῳ πολεως. I wish it were still in my power to be a hypocrite in this particular. The common duties of society usually require it; and the ecclesiastical profession only adds a little more to an innocent dissimulation, or rather simulation, without which it is impossible to pass through the world. Am I a liar because I order my servant to say I am not at home when I do not desire to see company?

"How could you imagine that I was under-secretary to Lord Hertford, or that I would ever be prevailed on to accept such a character? I am not secretary at all, but do the business of secretary to the embassy without any character. Bunbury has the commission and appointment—a young man of three or four and twenty, somewhat vain and ignorant, whom Lord Hertford refused to accept of, as thinking he would be of no use to him. The King gave me a pension of £200 a-year for life to engage me to attend his Lordship. My Lord is very impatient to have me secretary to the embassy, and writes very earnest letters to that purpose to the ministers—and among the rest to Lord Bute. He engaged me somewhat against my will to write also to such of my friends as had credit with that favourite, Oswald, Elliot, Sir Harry Erskine, and John Hume of Douglas. The King has promised that my Lord Hertford shall soon be satisfied in this particular; and yet I know not how, I suspect that some obstacle will yet interpose, though nothing can be more scandalous than for a man to enjoy the revenue of an office which is exercised by another. Mr. Bunbury has great interest, being married to a sister of the Duke of Richmond, and sister-in-law to Lord Holland. The appointments of this office are above £1000 a-year, and the expense

attending it nothing; and it leads to all the great employments. I wait the issue with patience, and even with indifference. At my years, and with my fortune, a man with a little common sense, without philosophy, may be indifferent about what happens.

"I am, dear Edmonstone,

"Yours sincerely,

"DAVID HUME."

The following fac-simile extracts from the MS. of the 'History' prove two things:—*First*, that Hume carefully composed and diligently corrected his composition; but *secondly*, that the finer passages having more occupied his attention, he had, before committing them to paper, more attentively elaborated and more nearly finished them. The characters of Alfred and of Edward III. are of this description, so is the earlier part of the magnificent description of the Romish Interdict's operation. The MS. of the 'Dialogues' affords an example of his repeated correction in his more ordinary passages. In the second edition of his works he again and again corrected; and even his familiar letters appear to have been laboured with similar care:—

"The ~~personal character~~ merit of this Prince, both ~~personal~~ in private life, & public may with advantage be set in opposition to ~~any that which~~ that of any Monarch or citizen, which the Annals of any age or any Nation, can present to us. He seems indeed to ~~ha~~ be the compleat model of that perfect character, which, under the denomination of a Sage or Wiseman, the Philosophers have ~~ever~~ been fond of delineating ~~framed~~, rather as a fiction of their imagination, than with the hopes of ever ~~ever~~ seeing it reduc'd to Practice: so happily were all his virtues temper'd together: so ~~nicely~~ justly were they blended: and so powerfully did each prevent the other from exceeding its proper Bounds. He knew how to conciliate the boldest enterprize with the coolest moderation: the most obstinate Perseverance with the easiest Flexibility: the

most severe justice with the greatest lenity: the most greatest affability of
rigorous command with the ~~most affable~~ deportment: the and inclination science
highest capacity ^ for ~~knowledge~~ with the most shining talents for action. His civil and his military virtues are ing
almost equally the objects of our admiration: except ^ only, that the former being more rare among princes, as well as more useful seem chiefly to challenge our applause. Nature also, as if desirous, that so bright a production of her skill him
shoud be set in the fairest light, had ~~endowed~~ ^ ~~with~~ bestowed on him
^ all bodily accomplishments, vigour of limbs, Dignity of shap and air, and a pleasant, engaging, and open countenance. Fortune, alone, by throwing him into that barbarous age, deprived him of historians worthy to transmit his Fame to Posterity: and we wish to see him ~~painted~~ delineated in more lively ~~strokes~~ colours, and with more particular strokes
~~lively colours,~~ that we may at least ~~see see~~ perceive some of those small Specks and Blemishes, from which, as a man, it is impossible he coud be entirely ~~free~~ exempted."

"The sentence of Interdict was at that time the great instrument of Vengeance and Policy employd by the Court of Rome: was pronounc'd against sovereigns for the lightest offences: and ~~for the guilt of one person~~ made the guilt of one person involve the Ruin of Millions, even in their spiritual and eternal Welfare. The execution of it was artificially calculated to strike the senses in the highest with irresistable force
degree, and to operate ^ on the superstitious minds. The Nation was of a sudden deprivd of all exterior exercise of its religion. The altars were despoild of ~~all~~ their ornaments. The crosses, the relicts, the images, the statues of the saints were laid on the ground, and as if the air itself were profan'd and might pollute them by its contact, the priests carefully cover'd them up, even from their own approach and veneration. The use of bells entirely ceas'd in all the churches. The bells themselves were removd

from the steeples and laid on the ground with the other sacred utensils. Mass was celebrated ~~in the church~~ churches * ▮▮▮▮ with shut doors, and none but the priests were ~~allow'd to attend~~ admitted to their holy institution. ~~No rite of religion was practied~~ The laity partook of no religious rite except baptism to new born infants, and the communion to the dying. The dead were not ~~allowed to be~~ interred in consecrated ground. They were thrown into ditches, and bury'd in common fields: and the obsequies were not attended with prayers or any hallow'd ceremony. Marriage was celebrated in the churchyards, and that ~~no~~ every action in life might bear marks of this dreadful situation, the people were ~~forbid~~ prohibited the use of meat, as in lent or ~~the~~ times of the highest penance, were debarrd from all pleasures and entertainments, and were forbid even to salute each other, or so much as to shave their beards and give any decent attention to their person and apparel. Every circumstance ~~bore the marks~~ carryd the symptoms of the deepest distress, and of the most ~~dreadful expectation~~ immediate apprehensions of divine vengeance and indignation."

HENRY III.

"I reckon not among the violations of the great charter some ~~practices~~ arbitrary Exertions of Prerogative, which Henry's necessities oblig'd him to practice, and which without producing any discontents were continued formly ~~practiced~~ by all his successors till the last century. As the parliament often refusd him supplies, and that sometimes in a manner somewhat ~~often in a very~~ rude and indecent ~~manner~~, he obliged his opulent subjects, particularly the citizens of London, to grant him loans of money: and it is natural to imagine, that the same

* Illegible.

want of economy reduced him to the necessity of borrowing him from necessities which ~~obliged him to borrow,~~ would prevent ~~but~~ He demanded benevolences, or pretended voluntary their contributions from his nobility & prelates. being very ~~regular~~ in ~~the~~ payment ~~of his debts~~. He was the first King of England since the Conquest who could be fairly said to lye under the restraint of law: and he also was the first who practiced the dispensing power, and employ'd the famous clause of *non obstante* in his grants and notwithstanding the great power of the monarchs, Patents both of the Saxon & Norman line ~~charters.~~ The Princes of Wales still preserved authority own country had often ~~had~~ been constrained to pay tribute in their ~~mountains~~: and tho' they ~~continued to do homage~~ to the crown of England, they were with difficulty in subordination or even in peace throughout retaind ~~in subjection,~~ and almost ~~in~~ every reign since the conquest had infested the English frontiers with inroads petty incursions and sudden ~~incursions,~~ which seldom ~~deserved to be mentioned~~ merited to have place ~~merited to have place~~ in a general history."

"The behaviour of John show'd him not unworthy of ~~generous~~ courteous never this treatment. His present abject fortune made him ~~never~~ forget a moment that he was a King. More sensible Edward's to ~~his the Princes~~ generosity than to his own calamities, he confess'd, that, notwithstanding his Defeat and Captivity, his Honour was still unimpair'd: and that, if he yielded the victory, it was at least gain'd by a Prince of such consummate Valour and Humanity."

EDWARD III.

"The prisoners were everywhere treated with Humanity and were soon after dismissd on paying moderate Ransoms to the Persons into whose hands they had fallen. The extent of their fortunes was consider'd, and no more was

exacted of them, that * what woud still leave them sufficient to enable them for the future, to take the field in a manner suitable to their rank & ~~station~~ quality. Yet so ~~numerous and such a~~ were the noble Prisoners, that ~~these~~ Ransoms ~~were sufficient to enri~~ join'd to the spoils of the ~~Battle~~ Field were sufficient to enrich the Princes army: and as they had sufferd very little in the action, their ~~triumph~~ joy & exultation was complete."

DIALOGUES ON NATURAL RELIGION.

"Now *Cleanthes* said *Philo*, with an air of Alacrity & Triumph—Mark the consequence. *First* By this Method of Reasoning, you renounce all ~~Pretencions~~ claim to Infinity in any of the attributes of the Deity. For as the Cause ought only to be proportion'd to the Effect, and the Effect so far as it falls under our cognisance: what Pretensions ~~you will joull say~~ have we, upon your supposition, to ascribe that ~~Epithet~~ Attribute to the Divine Being? You will still resist that, by ~~By~~ removing him so much from all similarity to human creatures, we ~~ty th give into the most arbitrary suppositions~~ hypothesis & at the same time weaken ~~destroy~~ all Proofs of his Existence.

"This Theory, I own, replyd *Cleanthes*, has never before occurd to me, tho' a pretty natural one; and I cannot readily ~~deliver any opinion about it~~ deliver any opinion with regard to it upon so short an examination & reflection. You are very scrupulous indeed, said *Philo*: ~~and were~~ Were I to ~~start objections and difficulties to~~ examine any system of yours, I should not have acted with half that caution and reserve in starting objections & difficulties to it. However, if any thing occur to you, you~~'ll~~ will oblige us by proposing it.

"I allow of your comparison ~~betwixt~~ between the *Stoics & Sceptics*,

* *Sic.*

~~as just,~~ may replyd *Philo*. But you ~~must~~ observe, at the same time, that the mind cannot in Stoicism, support the highest Flights of Philosophy, yet even when it sinks lower, it still retains somewhat of its former Disposition; & the effects of its ~~his~~ Reasoning ~~The Stoic his~~ The Stoics will appear in ~~its~~ ~~the Stoics~~ his conduct in common Life, and the whole Tenor ~~thro'~~ of its actions. The Antient schools, particularly ~~that of~~ ~~the school~~ that ~~the school of~~ *Zeno*, produced examples of Virtue & Constancy which seem astonishing to present times." that of

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It is necessary to correct a very gross misstatement into which some idle or ill-intentioned person has betrayed an ingenious and learned critic respecting the papers of Mr. Hume still remaining and in Edinburgh. "Those who have examined the Hume papers, which we know only from report, speak highly of their interest, but add that they furnish painful disclosures concerning the opinions then prevailing among the clergy of the northern metropolis; distinguished ministers of the Gospel encouraging the scoffs of their familiar friend, the author of the 'Essay on Miracles,' and echoing the blasphemies of their associate the author of the 'Essay on Suicide.'" These Edinburgh clergymen are then called "betrayers of their Lord," and much more is added of a like kind.* Now this heavy charge against some of the most pious and most virtuous men who ever adorned any church, Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Dr. Jardine, Dr. Drysdale, and others, seemed eminently unlikely to be well founded. I have caused minute search to be made; and on fully examining all that collection, the result is to give the most unqualified and peremptory contradiction to this scandalous report. It is inconceivable how such a rumour should have arisen in any quarter.

A severe, and we may well be permitted to add, a singularly absurd observation of Archbishop Magee is cited in

* Quarterly Review, vol. lxxiii. p. 556.

the same criticism.* His Grace describes Hume's heterodox writings as "standing memorials of a heart as wicked and a head as weak as ever pretended to the character of philosopher and moralist."

Now I have no right to complain of the Most Reverend Prelate for forming so low an estimate of Mr. Hume's understanding, and entertaining so bad an opinion of his heart; an estimate and an opinion not confined by his Grace to one class of his writings, though undeserved by any. Yet it does appear somewhat strange that merely because one of the most able men that ever lived, and one of the most virtuous, unhappily entertained religious opinions very different from those of the Archbishop, therefore he must be proclaimed both a dunce and a knave. It may also be permitted us to wish that the disciples of the religion in which "the greatest of these things is charity," and in which erring mortals are forbidden "to judge lest they be judged," should emulate the candour and the charity of unbelievers; for assuredly if Mr. Hume had lived to read the Archbishop's work on the 'Atonement,' though he might not have been converted by it, he would freely have confessed the great talents and the unspotted virtue of its author.

The strong, not to say violent, prejudices of Archbishop Magee against Mr. Hume appear plainly enough from what has been stated. But he shows in other parts of his Discourses, the influence of that feeling, in making him give hasty and groundless belief to stories which had reached him respecting the historian. He more than once affirms that Adam Smith was influenced by his sceptical friend to suppress a long paragraph which had appeared in the first edition of the 'Moral Sentiments,' and which, the Archbishop says, is not to be found in the subsequent editions. In this assertion he has been followed by Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Wardlaw, and other theological writers. But the whole foundation of the statement fails; for the passage appears in the four subsequent editions, three of which were published while Hume was alive, and the fifth in 1781, five years after his death; in all these it is retained with-

* Id. p. 552.

out any but mere verbal alterations. In the sixth edition, 1790, it is omitted; this was published a few months before Smith's death; but as Hume had been dead fourteen years, the omission then first made could not have arisen from his interference.

I have been favoured with the following Memorandum from the Foreign Office. The correspondence of 1763 and 1765 I examined, and have alluded to at p. 199.

"A search has been made in the offices of the Secretaries of State and in the State Paper Office for the correspondence of Mr. David Hume when Under-Secretary of State with Marshal Conway; but although letters have been found addressed to Mr. Hume in 1767–8, no letter signed by Mr. Hume can be found in any of the entry books of the period during which Mr. Hume was Under-Secretary of State; nor can any such letter be found in the books of the same period in the State Paper Office.

"It would appear from the postscript of a letter from Mr. Carroll, dated at Dresden, April 13, 1768, that Mr. Hume's retirement had then been spoken of.

"There are some letters in the State Paper Office in Mr. Hume's handwriting while Secretary to the Earl of Hertford, at Paris in 1763; and also his own letters when left as Chargé d'Affaires in France, from the 28th of July to the 13th of November, 1765.

"FOREIGN OFFICE, April 8, 1845."

The Caldwell Papers throw considerable light upon Mr. Hume's life. His great anxiety to obtain the professorship of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh in 1745, and his displeasure on finding that Hutchison had exerted himself against him, appears in one of his Letters to Baron Mure, one of his oldest and most valued, and justly valued, friends. But he could not reasonably complain of Hutchison, with whom he had no particular intimacy, and who might well think, as most men would, that the opinions avowed in his published works rendered him unfit for the office in question.

His Letters contained in the same collection are like all he wrote, full of sagacious observation as well as good humour, often of pleasantry. His gaiety of disposition, indeed, did not quit him, as we have seen, to the very last. The following letter to John Home, relates to the death of the Baron, and also to his own approaching end. He died 25th August:—

"DEAR JOHN, "EDINBURGH, 12th April, 1776.

"The loss which both of us, and I in particular, have sustained is irreparable. The Baron was the oldest and best friend I had in the world. I should be inconsolable did I not see an event approaching which reduces all things to a level.

"Our news is that Lord George Germaine has given that office to his own son. I wish this news may not prove too true.* I never had thoughts of living in London. Dr. Black (God bless him!) tells me that nothing is so improper for me as leaving my own home, jolting about on the road, or lying at inconvenient inns, and that I shall die with much more tranquillity in St. David-Street than any where else. Besides, where can I expect spiritual assistance so consolatory. When are you to be down? Bring Smith with you.

"Yours,

"D. HUME."

It appears from these Papers that the generally equable and placid temper of "*le bon David*," as he used to be called at Paris, was like that of many others, not proof against the loss of a game at whist, he priding himself, not very justly it is said, on being a good player. It is related that he left the room at Mrs. Mure's in a pet, on one such occasion; returning, however, next morning with an humble apology. There is no occasion to add, that they were not playing for money.

A venerable person, sister of the Baron, and who survived till 1790, says that "like many others of a sceptical or an

* Receiver-General of Jamaica, then worth £1,000 a-year, and which had risen to £6,000 before the death of Lord G. G.'s son, afterwards Duke of Dorset. The Baron's friends had endeavoured to obtain the succession for his family, to which application Hume alludes.

atheistic opinion," he was a believer in "dreams, presages, and omens. No man more credulous than he, or sees a judgment inflicted sooner than he does." There can be little or no doubt that this excellent person, distinguished as she was not more for her amiable manners than her literary taste, must have been deceived by his wonted habit of jesting on such subjects.

A singular circumstance is mentioned, of his telling a nephew of the Baron, then (1775) attending college at Edinburgh, and whom he desired to examine his History, and give his remarks on the style, that his 'Life of Harold' was "the portion he thought the best, and on the style of which he had bestowed most pains." It is perhaps not the part of the early history which is the most elaborately prepared, in regard to materials, and without examining the manuscript one cannot be certain that he had bestowed the greatest pains on the composition. There are many parts of the Anglo-Saxon period which might be supposed to have better claimed the character he gave this; such as the account of Alfred. If the young gentleman whom he desired to dissect the expressions performed his task, he might have found considerable ground for criticism, *e. g.*, vol. i. p. 125, (4to edition, therefore the one in view): William of Normandy is said to have dismissed Harold, his captive, with all the marks of *mutual* confidence, which is not much more correct than the ordinary vulgarism of "mutual friend" (for common friend.)

His autobiography very plainly describes the grievous disappointment which he felt on the ill success of the History. The following letter to Baron Mure gives further indications of it, and of his sensitiveness on the score of style. It further shows his extremely imperfect notions of quantity in Latin composition:—

MR. DAVID HUME TO MR. MURE (afterwards Baron Mure.)

"DEAR MURE, (No date, 1757.)

"I hope you do not think yourself obliged, by saying civil things, to make atonement for the too homely truths which you told me formerly. I will not believe so. I take for granted that you are equally sincere in both;

though I must own that I think my first volume a great deal better than the second.* The subject admitted of more eloquence, and of greater nicety of reasoning, and more accurate distinctions. The opposition, I may say the rage, with which it was received by the public, I must confess, did not a little surprise me. Whatever knowledge I pretend to, in history and human affairs, I had not so bad an opinion of men, as to expect that candour, disinterestedness, and humanity, could entitle me to that treatment. Yet such was my fate. After a long interval, I collected at last so much courage as to renew my application to the second volume, though with infinite disgust and reluctance; and I am sensible that in many passages of it, there are great signs of that disposition, and that my usual fire does not everywhere appear. At other times I excited myself, and perhaps succeeded better.

> "Exul eram, requiesque mihi, non fama petita est;
> Mens intenta suis ne foret usque malis.
> Nam simul ac meo caluerunt pectore musæ
> Altior humano spiritus ille malo est." †

I leave you to judge whether your letter came in a very seasonable time. I own that I had the weakness to be

* The second volume of the 'History of England' here alluded to, comprised the reigns of Charles II. and James II. The first volume, referred to in the previous letter, contained those of James I. and Charles I.—(*Note of Col. Mure.*)

† This epigram is a patchwork of several passages of Ovid, in digesting which the historian has not been quite so happy as he usually is in the style of his own vernacular prose. The two first lines are from the Tristia, lib. iv. eleg. 1, ver. 3 and 4. The fourth line also occurs at ver. 16 of the same elegy; coupled, however, with a different hexameter, as follows:—

> "Sic ubi mota calent viridi mea pectora thyrso,
> Altior humano spiritus ille malo est."

David's hexameter would seem to be his own composition, in order to substitute the enthusiasm of the Muses for that of Bacchus, which last—on the present occasion at least—did not suit his convenience. His object, however, has been effected, at the cost of fearful sins against the laws of quantity and scanning; whether owing to ignorance or carelessness may be a question. The verse, as he would have it, might be corrected—

> Nam simul atque meo caluerunt pectore musæ. . . . .

(*Note of Col. Mure.*)

affected by it; when I found that a person, whose judgment I very much valued, could tell me, though I was not asking, his opinion.

"But I will not proceed any further. The matter gave me uneasiness at the time, though without the least resentment; at present the uneasiness is gone, and all my usual friendship, confirmed by years and long acquaintance, remains.

"Pray, whether do you pity or blame me most with regard to this Dedication of my Dissertation to my friend the Poet?*

"I am sure I never executed anything which was either more elegant in the composition, or more generous in the intention. Yet such an alarm seized some fools here (men of very good sense, but fools in that particular,) that they assailed both him and me with the utmost violence, and engaged us to change our intention.

"I wrote to Miller to suppress that Dedication; two posts after I retracted that order. Can anything be more unlucky than that in the interval of these few days he should have opened his sale and disposed of 800 copies, without that Dedication, whence, I imagined my friend would reap some advantage, and myself so much honour?

"I have not been so heartily vexed at any accident of a long time. However, I have insisted that the Dedication shall still be published.

"I am a little uncertain what work I shall next undertake, for I do not care to be idle. I think you seem to approve of my going forward, and I am sensible that the subject is much more interesting to us, and even will be so to posterity, than any other I could chuse. But can I hope that there are materials for composing a just and sure history of it? I am afraid not. However, I shall examine the matter. I fancy it will be requisite for me to take a journey to London, and settle there for some time, in order to gather such materials as are not to be found in print. But if I should go backwards, and write the History of England from the accession of Henry VII., I might remain where I am: and I own to you, at my time of life, these

* John Home, author of 'Douglas,' then labouring under ecclesiastical censure, owing to the publication of his tragedy.—(*Col. Mure.*)

changes of habitation are not agreeable, even though the place be better, to which one removes.

"I am sorry my fair cousin* does not find London so agreeable as perhaps she expected. She must not judge by one winter. It will improve against next winter, and appear still better the winter after that. Please make my compliments to her, and tell her that she must not be discouraged. By the bye, Mrs. Binnie tells me that she writes her a very different account of matters; so that I find my cousin is a hypocrite.

"I shall make use of your criticisms, and wish there had been more of them. The practice of doubling the genitive is certainly very barbarous, and I carefully avoided it in the first volume. But I find it so universal a practice, both in writing and speaking, that I thought it better to comply with it; and have even changed all the passages in the first volume in conformity to use.

"All languages contain solecisms of that kind.

"Please make my compliments to Sir Harry Erskine,† and tell him that I have executed what I proposed.

"I am, dear Mure,

"Your most affec. friend and servant,

"DAVID HUME."

D. HUME à M. L'ABBÉ LE BLANC, Historiographe des Bâtiments du Roi.

"SIR,

"You will receive, along with this, a copy of the first volume of my History of Great Britain, which will be published next winter in London. The honour which you did me in translating my political discourses, inspires me with an ambition of desiring to have this work translated by the same excellent hand.

"The great curiosity of the events related in this volume, embellished by your elegant pen, might challenge the attention of the public. If you do not undertake this translation, I despair of ever having it done in a satisfactory manner. Many intricacies of the English Government,

* Mrs. Mure.

† Father of the late, grandfather of the present, Lord Rosslyn.

many customs peculiar to this Island, require explanation; and it will be necessary to accompany the translation with some notes, however short, in order to render it intelligible to foreigners. None but a person, so well acquainted as you, with England and the English constitution, can pretend to clear up obscurities, or explain the difficulties, which occur. If, at any time, you find yourself at a loss, be so good as to inform me: I shall spare no pains to solve all doubts, and convey all the lights, which, by my long and assiduous study of this subject, I may have acquired. The distance betwixt us need be no impediment to this correspondence. If you favour me frequently with your letters, I shall be able to render you the same service, as if I had the happiness of living next door to you, and was able to inspect the whole translation. In this attempt, the knowledge of the two languages is but one circumstance to qualify a man for a translator. Though your attainments in this respect be known to all the world, I own that I trust more to the spirit of reflection and reasoning which you discover: and I thence expect, that my performance will not only have justice done it, but will even receive considerable improvements, as it passes through your hands.

"I am, with great regard,
"Sir,
"Your most obedient, and most humble servant,
"DAVID HUME."

"EDINBURGH, 15th Oct., 1754."

"LISLE HOUSE, LEICESTER FIELDS,
12th August, 1766.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I have used the freedom to send to you in two packets by this post, the whole train of my correspondence with Rousseau, connected by a short narrative. I hope you will have leisure to peruse it. The story is incredible, as well as inconceivable, were it not founded on such authentic documents. Surely, never was there so much wickedness and madness combined in one human creature; nor did ever any one meet with such a return for such signal services, as those I performed towards him. But I am told, that he

used to say to Duclos and others, that he hated all those to whom he owed any obligation. In that case, I am fully entitled to his animosity.

"I am really at a loss what use to make of this collection.

"The story, I am told, is very much the object of conversation at Paris: though my conduct has been entirely innocent, or rather indeed, very meritorious, it happens, no doubt, as is usual in such ruptures, that I will bear a part of the blame, from which a publication of these papers would entirely free me: yet I own I have an antipathy and reluctance to appeal to the public, and fear that such a publication would be the only blame I could incur in this affair. You know that nobody's judgment weighs farther with me than yours.

"Think a little of the matter. If Madame de Dupré were in town, I would desire her to give these papers a perusal, and tell me her opinion. Unhappily, M. Trudaine would only understand the French part, which is by far the most considerable. What would his friend, Fontenelle, have done in this situation?

"I am as great a lover of peace as he, and have kept myself as free from all literary quarrels; but surely, neither he nor any other person, was ever engaged in a controversy with a man of so much malice, of such a profligate disposition to lies, and such great talents. It is nothing to dispute my style or my abilities as an historian or philosopher; my books ought to answer for themselves, or they are not worth the defending: to fifty writers, who have attacked me on this head, I never made the least reply; but this is a different case: imputations are here thrown on my morals and my conduct; and though my case is so clear as not to admit of the least controversy, yet it is only clear to those who know it, and I am uncertain how far the public in Paris are in this case. At London, a publication would be regarded as entirely superfluous.

"I must desire you to send these papers to D'Alembert after you have read them. M. Turgot will get them from him: I should desire that *he* saw them before he sets out for his government.

"Does not Madame de Monliquy laugh at me, that I should have sent her but a few weeks ago, the portrait of Rousseau,

done from an original in my possession, and should now send you these papers, which prove him to be one of the worst men that perhaps ever existed; if his frenzy be not some apology for him. I beg my compliments to M. and Madame de Fourquex, and am, with great truth and sincerity,

"My dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,

"DAVID HUME."

P.S.—I am sorry to tell you, that our accounts of the poor Chevalier Macdonald are very bad.

It is impossible to estimate too highly the value of Mr. Brodie's admirable 'History.' He has, with the greatest diligence and sagacity, traced Hume's errors, and his work, beside its other merits, may truly be said to demonstrate, in detail, how untrustworthy that celebrated writer is, and how deficient in the first quality of an historian.

NOTE TO ARCHBISHOP MAGEE, p. 222.

IF any one will read the Examination of the Archbishop before the Lords' Committee of 1825, he will have painful proofs of the lengths to which sectarian prejudice, or it may be religious zeal, will carry a person, generally speaking, of integrity and of acuteness. The deposition was upon oath; and the Archbishop was found to have very materially altered his answers after they had been regularly taken down. He was, therefore, again called before the Committee, and endeavoured to explain this proceeding. Nothing can be more unsatisfactory; I know it gave Lord Plunkett, as a friend of the Archbishop, great concern; and as the course taken in his supposed explanations can only be reconciled with a belief in the honesty of his sworn testimony, by the assumption, that his mind was *either* wholly deficient in perspicacity, or warped by prejudice and zeal, it may readily excite wonder to find, proceeding from such a quarter, the sentence which condemned Mr. Hume for want of *both* integrity and understanding, without any such alternative as above. The passages to be compared are those of pp. 673, 678, 679 (3 May), with those of pp. 947, 948, 949, 950, 953, 954 (8 June).

ROBERTSON.

JOINED in friendship and in fame with the great man whose life and writings we have been contemplating, and equally with him, founder of the reputation of our country for excellence in historical composition, was William Robertson, also a native of Scotland. His father, a learned, pious, and eloquent divine, was settled for several years as minister of the Scotch church in London Wall, but had returned to Scotland before his marriage with Miss Pitcairn of Dreghorn, in the county of Edinburgh, and was settled at Borthwick, in the same county, at the time of the historian's birth, on the 19th of September, 1721. I have been curious to ascertain the kind of genius which distinguished his father beside his talent for drawing, of which I possess a specimen showing some skill,* and by the kindness of a kinsman I have had the great satisfaction of receiving a copy of the only sermon which he ever published, as well as of two or three hymns, translations, and paraphrases from the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The sermon is able, judicious, correctly composed, both for accuracy of diction and severity of taste, and contains passages of great beauty and effect. It resembles what in England would be called an Ordination Sermon or Charge, being delivered at the opening of the Metropolitan Synod in

* It is a miniature in Indian ink of James, Earl of Seafield, one of the forfeited Lords, to whom he was believed to be distantly related. A tradition prevailed in the family that they descended from John Knox. The historian professed himself quite unacquainted with the reasons of this rumour which connected him with "the rustic Apostle," whose character and conduct he has described most faithfully and strikingly.

May, 1737, and is a full description of the duties of ministers, the title of it being that "they should please God rather than men." The poetry is elegant and classical. Both productions plainly show that good taste, as well as strong but sober reason, came to the great historian by descent as well as by study. But that his father held opinions more strict on some subjects than the relaxed rigour of the Presbyterian rule prescribed half a century later, may be seen from his requiring his son's promise never to enter a play-house. This was stated by him in reference to his father, when debating the question of John Home's having written the play of 'Douglas.' It is needless to add that, however much he differed with his father on this subject, he strictly adhered through life to the promise thus given, insomuch that when Garrick and Henderson at different times visited him, they entertained and interested him by exhibiting to him in private specimens of the art in which both so eminently excelled. The traditional character in his family, of the venerable person whom I have mentioned, was anything rather than sour or stern, how severe and unbending soever may have been his moral feelings. For the sweetness of his placid temper, and the cheerfulness of his kindly disposition, I have heard him spoken of in terms of the warmest enthusiasm by such of his children as were old enough at the time of his decease to recollect him distinctly. The idea of again meeting him in another state was ever present to my grandmother's mind, (who was his eldest daughter), and especially when stricken with any illness. It was with her a common source of argument for a future state, as proved by the light of nature, and in her pious mind a confirmation of the truth of Christianity, that, believing in the Divine goodness, she could not conceive the extinction of so much angelical purity as adorned her parent, and so fine an understanding as he possessed. Their mother

was a woman of great ability and force of character; but like many of that cast, women especially, she was more stern, and even severe than amiable; and this contrast, unfavourable to the one, redounded to the augmented love of the other. It cannot be doubted that the son's character derived a strong tincture from both parents, but that while he was mild and gentle in his temper, and of an engaging demeanour, his firmness and decision, nay, his inclination towards the Stoical system of morals, and even to a certain degree of Stoical feeling too, was derived from his mother.

The death of these two excellent persons was singularly melancholy, and served to impress on the minds of their family a mournful recollection of their virtues. Mr. Robertson had been removed to the Old Grey Friars' Church of Edinburgh in 1733; and ten years afterwards, both he and his wife, seized with putrid fever, died within a few days of one another, leaving eight children, six daughters and two sons, of whom William was the elder. He had been educated first at the school of Dalkeith, under a very able teacher of the name of Leslie, a gentleman at that time of the greatest eminence in his profession. On his father's removal to Edinburgh, he was taken thither and placed at the University, though only twelve years old. His diligence in study was unremitting, and he pursued his education at the different classes for eight years with indefatigable zeal. He had laid down for himself a strict plan of reading; and of the notes which he took there remain a number of books, beginning when he was only fourteen, all bearing the sentence as a motto which so characterised his love of learning, indicating that he delighted in it abstractedly, and for its own sake, without regarding the uses to which it might be turned—"*Vita sine litteris mors.*" I give this as his gloss upon the motto or text advisedly. His whole life was spent in study. I well

remember his constant habit of quitting the drawing-room both after dinner and again after tea, and remaining shut up in his library. The period of time when I saw this was after the 'History of America' had been published, and before Major Rennell's map and memoir appeared, which he tells us first suggested the 'Disquisition on Ancient India.' Consequently, for above ten years he was in the course of constant study, engaged in extending his information, examining and revolving the facts of history, contemplating ethical and theological truths, amusing his fancy with the strains of Greek and Roman poetry, or warming it at the fire of ancient eloquence so congenial to his mind, at once argumentative and rhetorical; and all this study produced not one written line, though thus unremittingly carried on. The same may be said of the ten years he passed in constant study from 1743, the beginning of his residence in a small parish, of very little clerical duty, to 1752, when we know from his letter to Lord Hailes he began his first work. But, indeed, the composition of his three great works, spread over a period of nearly thirty years, clearly evinces that during this long time his studies must have been much more subservient to his own gratification than to the preparation of his writings, which never could have required one half that number of years for their completion.*

Translations from the classics, and especially from the Greek, of which he was a perfect master, formed a considerable part of his labour as a student. He considered this exercise as well calculated to give an accurate knowledge of our own language, by obliging us to weigh the shades of difference between words or

* The love of science or letters for their own sake, and without any regard to other benefits than the pleasure afforded by the discovery, or by the contemplation of truth, is strikingly illustrated in others of these Lives, especially that of D'Alembert, Black, and Banks. See Appendix to this Life.

phrases, and to find the expression, whether by the selection of the terms or the turning of the idiom, which is required for a given meaning; whereas, when composing originally, the idea may be varied in order to suit the diction which most easily presents itself, of which the influence produced manifestly by rhymes, in moulding the sense as well as suggesting it, affords a striking and familiar example.* His translations, however, were not wholly confined to their purpose of teaching composition; he appears to have at the same time undertaken the work of rendering some ancient treatises, which peculiarly interested him. He had even prepared for the press a translation of Antoninus's 'Meditations,'† having thus early felt a strong leaning towards the Stoical philosophy. The appearance of a very poor translation at Glasgow prevented the execution of this design, but the work remains: I have it now in my possession, and shall give one or two passages in the Appendix. In elocution he acquired facility and correctness by attending a society which met weekly to debate literary and philosophical questions. This society gave rise many years later to another, which was frequented by the men who in after life proved the most distinguished of their countrymen: Hume, Smith (neither of whom ever took part in debate), Wedderburn (afterwards Chancellor), Ferguson, Home (Lord Kames), were of the number. But his thirst for knowledge was not confined to these its more easy and more inviting walks. He had deeply studied some branches of the severer sciences. It is not, therefore, without good cause that he speaks of mathematical subjects (in his preface to the work on India) as having been embraced in his course of study, though not having

* I may mention that both he and his son, the Judge, prescribed this exercise to me, and among other things, made me translate all the 'History' of Florus.

† Marc. Aurel.: Τῶν εἰς ἑαυτόν.

been carried so far as a discussion of the Brahminical astronomy might require.

In 1741, according to the constitution of the Scotch Church, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Edinburgh to preach; orders being only conferred upon a presentation to a living or Kirk. Two years after, he was appointed minister of Gladsmuir, a country parish in East Lothian; and this event happened fortunately on the eve of the irreparable loss sustained by the family in the death of both their parents, which left his brother and his sisters wholly without provision. He immediately took the care of them upon himself, and would form no connexion by marriage until he had seen them placed in situations of independence. He thus remained single for eight years, during which his eldest and favourite sister superintended his family. In her sound judgment he always had the greatest confidence; for he knew that to great beauty she added a calm and a firm temper, inherited from their mother, but with greater sweetness of disposition. An instance of her fortitude and presence of mind was sometimes mentioned by him, though never alluded to by herself, that a swarm of bees having settled on her head and shoulders while sitting in the garden, she remained motionless until they took wing, thus saving her life, which was in imminent jeopardy. She was married in 1750, and the year after he married his cousin, Miss Nesbit.

While at Gladsmuir, where he remained fifteen years, his life was passed in constant study, and in the duties of his sacred profession. He rose very early, and devoted the whole morning to his books. Later in the day he had ample time for visiting the sick and the poor generally; and he gave great attention to the important duty of examining and catechising the young people under his care. But nothing can be more absurd than the statement in some of the lives which have been published, as if his whole time after

breakfast was devoted to these duties. It would have been utterly impossible to find subjects for his visits in that small country parish, not containing two hundred families.

It is remarkable that, with all the love of study which formed so striking a feature of his character, nay, with the contemplative disposition which his thirst of knowledge for its own sake plainly indicates, he should have joined an extraordinary fitness for the less speculative pursuits of active life, and a manifest willingness to bear a part in them. The rebellion of 1745 afforded an occasion on which he conceived that the dangers surrounding civil and religious liberty called for the exertions of all good citizens in its defence. On the news of the rebels marching towards Edinburgh he quitted his parsonage (manse) and joined the volunteers of the capital. How far they marched is not known; but that they must have proceeded towards the Highlands, and for some time remained under arms, is certain from this, that he always mentioned the effect of the first coal fire on his head after he had been for some time accustomed to burn peat only. When Edinburgh was surrendered he joined a small body of persons from that city, who offered their services at Haddington to the Commander-in-Chief.

Soon after his marriage he was returned as a member to the General Assembly, and again his capacity and his inclination for active life appeared. He devoted himself assiduously to the business of that body; and, having a very strong and clear opinion in favour of lay patronage, the great question which divided the Church of Scotland in that day, as, in truth, it again does in our own, he assumed the lead of its advocates. At first they formed a small minority of the Assembly; but, by degrees, reason enforced by eloquence had its course, and he gained ultimately a complete victory over his adversaries.

The persecution of John Home, by the fanatical party, for writing the moral and innocent and even pious tragedy of 'Douglas,' gave another occasion to show Dr. Robertson's liberal and rational sentiments. Such of the clergy as had attended the theatre to witness the representation were involved in the same bigoted outcry. Home himself bent to the storm, and resigned his living; Robertson's judicious but spirited defence saved the rest from more than a rebuke to some, and a few weeks' suspension to others. He manfully explained why he had never attended himself, saying, that it was only owing to the promise already mentioned; but he avowed that he saw no harm in the attendance of his brethren whom no such promise bound.

He was now looked up to as the acknowledged leader of the moderate party; and, as they soon after became the ruling body in the Church, he must be considered as the leading minister of that venerable body during all the time he continued in the Assembly. Of the lustre with which his talents now shone forth all men are agreed in giving the same account. I have frequently conversed with those who could well remember his conduct as a great party chief, and they all dwelt upon the manifest capacity which he displayed for affairs. "That he was not in his right place when only a clerical leader or a literary man, but was plainly designed by nature, as well as formed by study, for a great practical statesman and orator," is the remark which seems to have struck all who observed his course. His eloquence was bold and masculine; his diction, which flowed with perfect ease, resembled that of his writings, but of course became suited to the exigencies of extemporaneous speech. He had the happy faculty of conveying an argument in a statement, and would more than half answer his adversary by describing his propositions and his reasonings. He showed the greatest presence of mind

in debate; and, as nothing could ruffle the calmness of his temper, it was quite impossible to find him getting into a difficulty, or to take him at a disadvantage. He knew precisely the proper time of coming forward to debate, the time when, repairing other men's errors, supplying their deficiencies, and repelling the adverse assaults, he could make sure of most advantageously influencing the result of the conflict, to which he ever steadily looked, and not to display. If his habitual command of temper averted anger and made him loved, his undeviating dignity both of conduct and of demeanour secured him respect. The purity of his blameless life, and the rigid decorum of his manners, made all personal attacks upon him hopeless; and, in the management of party concerns, he was so far above any thing like manœuvre or stratagem, that he achieved the triumph so rare, and for a party chief so hard to win, of making his influence seem always to rest on reason and principle, and his success in carrying his measures to arise from their wisdom, and not from his own power.

They relate one instance of his being thrown somewhat off his guard, and showing a feeling of great displeasure, if not of anger, in a severe remark upon a young member. But the provocation was wholly out of the ordinary course of things, and it might well have excused, nay, called for, a much more unsparing visitation than his remark, which really poured oil into the wound it made. Mr. Cullen, afterwards Lord Cullen, was celebrated for his unrivalled talent of mimicry, and Dr. Robertson, who was one of his favourite subjects, had left the Assembly to dine, meaning to return. As the aisle of the old church, consecrated to the Assembly meetings, was at that late hour extremely dark, the artist took his opportunity of rising in the Principal's place and delivering a short speech in his character, an evolution which he accomplished without detection. The true chief re-

turned soon after; and, at the proper time for his interposition, rose to address the house. The venerable Assembly was convulsed with laughter, for he seemed to be repeating what he had said before, so happy had the imitation been. He was astonished and vexed when some one explained the mystery—opened as it were the dark passage where Mr. Cullen had been acting. He said he saw how it was, and hoped that a gentleman who could well speak in his own person would at length begin to act the character which properly belonged to him.*

That great additional weight accrued to him as ruler of the Church, from the lustre of his literary fame cannot be doubted; and that the circumstance of his connexion with the University always securing him a seat in the Assembly, while others went out in rotation, tended greatly to consolidate his influence, is equally clear. But these accidents, as they are with respect to the General Assembly, would have availed him little, had not his intrinsic qualities as a great practical statesman secured his power. He may be said to have directed the ecclesiastical affairs of Scotland for more than a quarter of a century with unexampled success, and without any compromise of his own opinions, or modification of his views of church policy; and he quitted the scene of his brilliant career while in the full vigour of his faculties, and the untarnished lustre of his fame.

At the latter end of George II.'s reign, that Prince, or his advisers, deemed it expedient to make a proposal, having for its object the elevation of this eminent person to a high rank in the English Church. The particulars are not known; but Mr. Stewart, who

* A somewhat similar scene occurred in the House of Commons on the publication of Mr. Tickell's celebrated jeu d'esprit, 'Anticipation.' It only appeared on the morning of the day when the session opened, and some of the speakers who had not read it verified it, to the no small amusement of those who had.

probably had some intimation of them, says that the offer was met with "a rejection, in terms which effectually prevented a repetition of the attempt." Probably he considered it as, in substance, an insult to his character for sincerity as well as independence; for though no man was less tainted by narrow-minded bigotry, and none probably could regard as matter of course less than he did the differences, rather political than religious, which separate the two churches as matters of conscience, he yet had declared his aversion to Episcopacy on grounds not to be shaken, at any rate not to be shaken by a proposal accompanied with temporal advantage, and he would have deemed his entertaining it for an instant a corrupt sacrifice of his principles to the gratification of his ambition.

While the conflict was raging in the Church Courts on Patronage, he had given to the world his first published works—his historical articles contributed to a periodical work established by Smith, Wedderburn (afterwards Chancellor), Jardine, Blair, Russell, and others, under the name, since become more famous, of the Edinburgh Review, and a sermon preached before the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, in January 1755. The Review contained many able and learned papers, and reached a second number, when its conductors were obliged to give it up in consequence of the fanatical outcry raised against a most justly severe criticism upon a wretched production of theological bigotry and intolerance which had recently disgraced the extreme party in the Church.* The subject of the sermon is one pecu-

* This criticism was from the elegant pen of Dr. Jardine, one of the most pious ministers of the Church, and a very intimate friend of the Principal. The papers of the latter appear to have been chiefly written on subjects which he had occasion to consider as incidental to his historical researches, and he does not seem to have put forth his strength in their composition. They are slight as compared with Adam Smith's review of Johnson's Dictionary, and his excellent letter to the editors on the General State of Literature, recommending an enlargement of their plan, which was confined to Scottish publications.

liarly suited to his habits of inquiry—the situation of the world at the time of our Saviour's appearance as connected with the success of his mission. The merits of this piece, as a sermon, are very great; and it is admirable, as an historical composition, in that department which Voltaire first extended to all the records of past times. It was written and published before the appearance of the 'Essai sur les Mœurs;' though, as has been already said,* detached portions of that work had appeared in a Paris periodical work.

As a preacher he was most successful. His language, of course, was pure, his composition graceful, his reasoning cogent, his manner impressive. He spoke according to the custom of the Scottish Church, having only notes to assist his memory. His notions of usefulness, and his wish to avoid the fanaticism of the High Church party (what with us would be called the Low Church, or Evangelical), led him generally to prefer moral to theological or Gospel subjects. Yet he mingled also three themes essential to the duties of a Christian pastor. He loved to dwell on the goodness of the Deity, as shown forth not only in the monuments of creation, but the work of love in the redemption of mankind. He delighted to expatiate on the fate of man in a future state of being, and to contrast the darkness of the views which the wisest of the heathen had, with the perfect light of the new dispensation. He oftentimes would expound the Scriptures, taking, as is the usage of the Kirk, a portion of some chapter for the subject of what is called *lecture* as contradistinguished from sermon; and in these discourses, the richness of his learning, the remarkable clearness of his explanation, the felicity of his illustration, shone forth, as well as the cogency and elegance of his practical application to our duties in life, the end and aim of all his teaching. I have heard him

* Life of Voltaire.

repeatedly, occupying as he did from 1759 to his death the pulpit of the Old Grey Friars, where his father had been minister before him. But one sermon, though I was very young at the time, I never can forget. The occasion was the celebration (5th November, 1788) of the centenary of the Revolution, and his sister, considering that to have heard such a man discourse on such a subject was a thing to be remembered by any one through life ever after, took me to hear him. It was of singular and striking interest, for the extreme earnestness, the youthful fervour with which it was delivered. But it touched in some passages upon a revolution which he expected and saw approaching, if not begun, as well as upon the one which was long past, and almost faded from the memory in the more absorbing interest of present affairs. I well remember his referring to the events then passing on the Continent, as the forerunners of far greater ones which he saw casting their shadows before. He certainly had no apprehensions of mischief, but he was full of hope for the future, and his exultation was boundless in contemplating the deliverance of "so many millions of so great a nation from the fetters of arbitrary government." His sister and I often afterwards reflected on this extraordinary discourse with wonder, and I feel almost certain of some such expressions as these having been used, and of his foretelling that our neighbours would one day have to celebrate such an event as had now called us together. We dined with him the same day on leaving the church, for it was the afternoon service that he had performed. His eldest son, afterwards Lord Robertson, was of the company: and when the Principal expressed his satisfaction at having had his presence at church (a thing by no means of weekly occurrence), the answer was, "Ay, sir, if you'll always give us such sermons, you may make it worth our while." "Ah," answered he, "you would like it, as the boys say," referring to a

vulgar school taunt. I have again and again asked my learned kinsman to show me the sermon, which he admitted he possessed among his father's papers, fairly written out. His answer was that he wished to avoid giving it publicity, because, in the violence of the times, the author of it would be set down for a Jacobin, how innocent soever he was at the day of its being preached. Those times have happily long since passed away. I cannot believe that any one has ventured to destroy this remarkable production, though hitherto it has not been found.*—I return to the course of his life.

From 1752 to 1758 he had been diligently occupied with the 'History of Scotland;' in 1759 it appeared. The success of this admirable work was as immediate and as universal as it was deserved. The whole edition, though of two quarto volumes, was exhausted in less than a month. There was but one voice in every part of the country, and among all ranks and descriptions of men, both upon its pure and beautiful composition, its interesting narrative, and its anxious and conscientious accuracy. A murmur was heard from the Jacobite party, who in Scotland were more wild and romantic, and more unreasoning, than in the southern parts of the island. Not satisfied with the far less harsh view of Mary's conduct which he had taken compared with Hume's, partial as Hume was to the Stuarts, it was the fashion of this little set of enthusiasts to say that he had "cut her with a razor dipped in oil." It was no little concession to have acquitted her of all part in Babington's conspiracy, to have left her share in Darnley's murder hanging in doubt, to

* My kinsman, executor of Lord Robertson, has at length, after many a fruitless search, succeeded in finding the sermon, and it now lies before me, written in his own hand. I can see the places where he added remarks made on the inspiration of the moment, particularly the one above cited, of which I am the more certain from the subsequent conversations of his sister, who heard it with me.

have pronounced a decisive judgment against Elizabeth, for her whole conduct both towards the Scots and their Queen. These silly persons would not be appeased unless, in the face of all her own conduct and her own words, she was acquitted of the outrage on common decency of wedding her husband's murderer, and screening his accomplices from punishment. But the clamour, though it produced a book or two in support of this most desperate cause, spread very little even in Scotland; and the national vanity was inexpressibly gratified by this great triumph in the most important and most popular of all the walks of polite learning. The delight of his friends was of course still more lively. Aware of his merits, as they always had been, and somewhat impatient of the length of time which he had suffered his known capacity to remain barren, now that they saw the abundant fruits crowning his works, they exulted as if they gathered in the rich harvest in common, and confessed that the postponement had not stunted the growth, but, like a fallow, made it more plenteous and more rich. In truth, the discipline of so many years' study to which he had subjected himself, the long delay which he had interposed, though all the while thoroughly versed in the arts of composition, had the salutary effect of making his first work as mature as his latest production. This is perhaps a singular instance of one who had from his early youth been studying diction, who had been constantly writing, and had for long years been almost as expert as he ever became, withholding himself from employing the faculty which he had acquired, except to render himself still more dexterous in its use, and continuing four and twenty years ere he appeared before the world, nay, eighteen years before he even began to write the work which should lay the foundation of his fame. He was eight and thirty when he published it. But then it is another singularity as

great, that considerable doubt remains if any of his subsequent works surpassed this first production.

Among his exulting friends, David Hume deserves to be singled out for the heartiness of his disinterested joy. Far from not bearing a brother near the throne, he entirely rejoiced in his rival's success, and even in the uniting of all testimonies to his merits, so strongly contrasted with the universal clamour for some years raised against his own 'History,' and the niggard praise which, even after five years, that work received. Among other kind acts, he encouraged some literary men at Paris to translate the new 'History;' and he thus jocosely touches upon the loss of his undivided superiority as an historian: "I warn you, however, this is the last time I shall ever speak the least good of it. A plague take you! Here I sat near the historical summit of Parnassus, immediately under Dr. Smollett,* and you have the impudence to squeeze yourself past me, and place yourself directly under his feet! Do you imagine that this can be agreeable to me? and must not I be guilty of great simplicity to contribute by my endeavours to your thrusting me out of my place both at Paris and in London? But I give you warning that you will find the matter somewhat difficult, at least in the former city. A friend of mine who is there, writes home to his father the strangest accounts of that kind, which my modesty will not allow me to repeat, but which it allowed me very deliciously to swallow."

Just before the 'History' was published, the author visited London for the first time; and his merit having been made known to some persons of eminence and of good taste, who had been allowed to peruse portions, at least, of the proof sheets, his reception was of a distinguished kind. I have now before me some letters of his to his bosom friend, and steady coad-

* He of course had the lowest opinion of this writer's parts as an historian.

jutor in ecclesiastical politics, Dr. Jardine, and it is pleasing to mark the natural expression of his satisfaction with his visit.

The first letter which I shall give begins with a good deal of narrative upon the success of John Home's 'Agis.' At that time the violence and folly of the fanatical party made the subject of this elegant and amiable writer's dramas doubly interesting to his friends. The tragedy, so successful at first, chiefly because of its predecessor, 'Douglas,'* having succeeded through merit, and partly because of high patronage, is a very middling performance, and, like all Mr. Home's plays, except 'Douglas,' has long since sunk into deserved oblivion. Dr. Robertson's amiable zeal for his friend, and his exultation at the success of his piece, is very striking in this letter.

"MY DEAR SIR, "Thursday, March 16th.

"When I wrote you the history of 'Agis,' I certainly foresaw some of the purposes for which it would serve, and that you would naturally employ it for an use of mortification to the wicked, as well as of comfort to the pious. I could not, however, have any presage either of the absurdity of the players, or of the malice and credulity of Home's enemies, which rendered my account doubly seasonable. I now put it in your power to mortify them with still fuller accounts of the triumphs of 'Agis.' Never were there more crowded houses than during the whole run of the play. The Prince of Wales was present no less than three different nights, one of which a benefit night. Such honourable distinction was never formerly bestowed upon any new piece. The snarlers and small critics are somewhat enraged at this, and every one against Lord Bute; though I can assure you, the frequency of the Prince's

* 'Douglas' was the second in date of composition, though the first performed. Garrick had rejected it peremptorily; and it was brought out with great success at Edinburgh. Garrick had also rejected all Home's other pieces; until Lord Bute and other persons of distinction patronised the poet, when the manager, following his ignoble nature, suddenly became the zealous and forward patron of all he wrote, and joined those noble supporters in forcing the very poor tragedy of 'Agis' on the public.

attendance was his own proper motion, and proceeded from his admiration of 'Agis.' But what is still more honourable for Home, since the ninth night, 'Agis' has been acted twice, and both times the house was more crowded (if possible), and the applause louder than ever. There has appeared a critic on 'Agis,' one Henerden. I am persuaded Home has hired him, and given him a crown to write such execrable stuff. Every body laughs at it; and, in the wicked language of this town, it is called a d——d tame piece of nonsense. Wedderburn makes all the progress we could wish: even the door-keeper of the House of Peers tells me that 'he is a d——d clever fellow, and speaks devilish good English.' This very morning he was retained in a Plantation cause before the Privy Council, which is a thing altogether extraordinary for so young a man. You cannot imagine what odd fellows his rivals are, and how far and how fast he is likely to go.

"I can't say so much about my own progress. I unluckily have but one copy of my 'History,' otherwise I might advance with more rapidity. I have been with Horace Walpole, a son of Sir Robert's, a very clever man, and of great leading among the literary people of fashion. We had much conversation about Mary. He is one of the greatest critics I ever met with, as to the facts in the period. Our notions jumped perfectly. Part of my papers are in his hands; the Duke of Argyle has another; Scott, who was preceptor to the Prince of Wales, a third; and Lord Royston a fourth. I have got from this last a vast collection of original papers; many of them are curious. I am advised by several people to transcribe as many as will swell the book to a guinea price. The taste of this town is such, that such an addition will be esteemed very meritorious; and though it cost me little but having an amanuensis, it will add to the price in proportion to the increase of bulk. You see I begin to learn the craft of authorship. I have hitherto industriously avoided meeting with booksellers, but shall soon begin my operations with them. I have had a great offer from Hamilton and Balfour, which you'll probably have heard of. I can scarcely believe that even the effrontery of W——r's roguery could have seriously set his face to such a scheme as that you mention. I scarce think

it necessary, upon such a surmise, to write to Lord Milton; but I shall drop a line to Mrs. Wedderburn or Miss Hepburn, in order to prevent any such foolish measure being heard with patience. I have not yet seen either Dr. Chandler or the Lions. All the other scenes you recommend to me I have seen. I have heard the Bishops of Salisbury and Oxford. There was some elegance, a spice of drollery, and not a little buffoonery in the sermon of the latter; and his audience admired and laughed, and were edified. Blair is but a ninny of an orator; he makes his hearers serious, and sets them a-crying; but here they go to heaven, laughing as they go. You cannot imagine what strange characters I have met with, which I cannot now take off. I am a sort of domestic with Dr. Campbell, the best of all the authors I have seen.* I am often with Tucker of Bristol. I dined and drank claret with Douglas, the murderer of Bower."—"There were nine other persons in company (at another dinner), all of them retainers to the author or bookseller; and I will draw you such a picture of that night, that you shall say the seeing of it alone was worth my coming to London. I wrote Bruce a long letter about news some days ago: you would probably meet with him and hear its contents. The Hanoverians are still making progress, as you will read more at large in the 'Chronicle.' The only thing which engrosses the talk of politicians is the flight of Bonneville. He was the officer who dissuaded the landing at Rochefort, and who, before the court-martial, gave evidence directly opposite to Clerk's. He went over to Holland; was seen often at d'Affry's, the French Ambassador's: he told him, 'Sir, I do possess some merit; I saved one town to France, and three generals to England.' His evidence acquitted Mordant, &c. From Holland he went over to France. You may believe Pit† and Colonel Clerk, &c., enjoy this adventure, which is indeed a remarkable one. Last day I was in the House of Commons, of which I am made free by"——

* The able author of the fine historical pieces in the edition 1740 of Harris's 'Voyages.' Dr. R. always used to mention his Presbyterian horror of the "profane expletives" which he found formed a part of all English colloquial discourse in those days.

† Sic.

Unfortunately the MS. breaks off just as he was about to describe the debate.

The following letter gives a further account of the historian's progress in preparing for the publication of his work. It is written to the same friend, Dr. Jardine:—

"My dear John, "London, 20th April, 1759.

"I write this in the British Coffee-House,* in the middle of a company playing at cards and drinking claret. After this preamble, you are not to expect either a very long or a very distinct epistle. As to your letter, I postponed writing an answer to it, in expectation of hearing some account of the transactions of the Haddington Presbytery; but as that has not come to hand, I must proceed to write without it. I am as much interested as you can possibly be in preventing the intended elevation of Turnstill to the Moderator's chair. But how could it possibly enter into the head of such a politician as you are, and one who has seen London too, that there was any method of engaging our laymen here to take part in a question about which they (laymen) are totally indifferent? At the same time, I am earnest in giving opposition, and I think it may be made with great probability of success; but I should be apt to imagine that neither Dick nor Hamilton are the proper candidates. You know neither of them stand well with Lord Milton;† and if either you or I should give our interest or solicit for them, you know what a handle might be made of it. If Morrison, or some such grave, inoffensive, ecclesiastical personage could be set up, I join you with all my vigour. You must make the choice as well as you can. Why may you not stand yourself? At any rate, fix upon some feasible man. Write a few letters, and endeavour to raise the jealousy of the brethren against a perpetual moderator, and I don't doubt of our defeating the Doctor. If we can discomfit him by our own strength, this will ren-

* Much frequented then, as it still is, by Scotchmen. The gentlewoman who at that time kept it was sister to Bishop Douglas, and a person of excellent manners and abilities.

† Then a kind of minister for Scotland, being Lord Bute's uncle.

der him inconsiderable: all other methods of doing so would be ineffectual.

"I have now brought my offers to a conclusion with Andrew Millar. After viewing the town, and considering the irresistible power of a combination of booksellers, I have agreed to sell him the property for £600. This, you see, is the sum I originally fixed upon as the full price of my work, and is more than was ever given for any book except David Hume's. You cannot imagine how much it has astonished all the London authors, nor how much Andrew Millar was astonished at the encomiums of my book which he got from people of rank. I have got some of the best puffers of England on my side. Mr. Doddington, Horace Walpole, Lady Hervey, and the Speaker are my sworn friends; and you will wonder, even in this great place, how I have got Mary Queen of Scots to be a subject of conversation. Every body here approves of the bargain I have made with Millar, and I am fully satisfied of the prudence of my own conduct; but of this I shall have full leisure to talk with you soon. The exploits which Carlyle and I have performed among the Dissenters are beyond belief. Poor Dr. Chandler is humbled to the dust, and he feels it as much as other quack doctors feel their mortification. This day I signed my contract with Andrew Millar, and am, according to your advice, to be a Doctor of Divinity within six months, so that I shall take place immediately after Dr. Blair, as he taketh place immediately after Dr. Turnstill. What great things have I to say of Mr. Pit,* who yesterday brought all the Tories to approve of continental measures as the only thing for the good of old England! Yesterday I dined with Mr. Garrick, in spite of John Hyndman† and the Presbytery of Dalkeith. Tomorrow I go to Portsmouth, to wait on Admiral Hawke and see the Royal George. How much have I to tell you! I ever am yours, "Wm. R."

The rank of the 'History of Scotland' stands very high indeed among the most eminent of historical compositions. The philosophical spirit which per-

* Sic. † A leader among the fanatical party in the Kirk.

vades it, the enlarged views of polity in which it abounds, the sober and rational, but bold speculations with which it is variegated, and the constant references to authorities which accompany it, place it above the works of antiquity, deficient in all these particulars, altogether wanting in some of them. The skilful and striking delineations of individual character which are mingled with the narrative, but never overlay it, and the reference to the histories of other countries which is introduced wherever it became necessary or instructive, forms another high merit of the work. But it is as a history, and a history of Scotland, that its execution must mainly be regarded, and in this it is truly a great performance. It is difficult to admire sufficiently the graphic power which the historian displays in bringing before us the rude and stormy period he has chosen to describe—the strange mixture of simple barbaric manners in some classes, with artificial refinement in others—of poverty in the country with splendour at court, and among the chiefs—of great crimes with striking virtues—the morality of unprincipled and ferocious men with the vehement religious opinions of fanatics—the spectacle of a nation hardly half-civilized, barely emerging from a rude state, conducted by rulers, and disputed by factious leaders, with all the refinements and corruption of statesmen bred in the Italian courts. In the great staple of all historical excellence, the narrative, it has certainly never been surpassed. There is nothing obscure or vague, nothing affected or epigrammatic, nor is any sacrifice made of the sense to the phrase; the diction is simple and pure, and soberly, if at all, adorned; but it is also striking; the things described are presented in the clearest light, and with the most vivid, natural, and unambitious colouring, without exaggeration, apparently without effort; like the figures of Raphael, which, for this reason, never captivate us so much on the first view as after we have repeatedly

gazed upon them with still increasing wonder. The even flow of the story, the last perfection, and the most difficult which the narrative art attains, is likewise complete. If not overlaid with ornament, nor disfigured by declamation, nor studded with points and other feats of speech, so neither is it broken by abrupt transitions and unseemly pauses, but holds its clear, simple, majestic course uninterrupted and untroubled. The story of Livy does not more differ from that of Tacitus in all these essentials than the simple but striking narration of the Scotch historian from the tinsel, the epigram, the word-catching of Gibbon.

For examples to illustrate the high merits of this narrative, we need not have recourse to a curious selection of remarkable scenes or events, because the texture of the 'History' in the ordinary portions of its fabric where the mere common annals are related, would be sufficient. There may, however, be no harm in noting the singular effect of the story when Rizzio's murder is related, or Gowrie's conspiracy, or Mary's execution. The artist-like selection of particulars is to be marked in all these cases; as in the first, Ruthven's figure clad in armour, and ghastly pale from his late illness; in the second, the trembling of the mysterious armed man with a dagger near him, and a sword in the small study whither the Earl had led the King, closing the doors behind them, and up a staircase; in the third, the Queen's majestic air and noble dress, the pomander chain of her Agnus Dei round her neck, the beads at her girdle, the crucifix of ivory in her hand. By all these skilful selections we are made to see, as it were, the things represented to us, and the pen of the great historian produces the effect of the great artist's pencil, while its pictures are not subject to the destroying influence of time.*

* Hume, as well as Robertson, has given this scene of Mary's death;

There seems considerable reason to lament that an intimate acquaintance with the great scenes and celebrated characters of history, in all ages, should have made the historian too familiar with the crimes on a great scale of importance, and therefore of wickedness, perpetrated by persons in exalted stations, so that he suppresses in recounting or in citing them the feelings of severe reprobation to which a more pure morality, a more strict justice, would certainly have given vent. It is painful to see him fall into the vulgar and pernicious delusion which secures for the worst enemies of their species the position and the praise of worldly greatness. It is equally painful to see the worst crimes, even of a more ordinary description, passed over in silence when they sully the illustrious culprit. Let us only, by way of example, and for explanation, survey the highly-wrought and indeed admirably composed character of Queen Elizabeth. It opens with enrolling Henry V. and Edward III. among "the monarchs who merit the people's gratitude;" nay, it singles them out from among the list on which William III., Edward I., and Alfred himself stand enrolled, and holds them up as the most gratefully admired of all for the "blessings and splendour of their reigns." Yet the wars of Henry V. are the only, and of Edward III. almost the only deeds by which we can know them; or if any benefit accrued to our constitution from these princes, it was in consequence of the pecuniary difficulties into which their wars plunged them, but plunged their kingdoms too, so that our liberties made some gain from the dreadful expense of blood and of treasure by which those conquerors exhausted their

the latter with by far greater effect. But it is singular that he should have left out her noble remonstrance with the commissioners when refused the assistance of her servants. It has a great effect in Hume. His observations on the trial are really beneath contempt. The gross errors into which he falls on the principles of evidence seem hardly credible, and arise from his careless habits, and from his rashly undertaking to deal with matters of which he was ignorant.

dominions. Then Elizabeth is described as "still adored in England;" and though her "dissimulation without necessity, and her severity beyond example," are recorded as making her treatment of Mary an exception to the rest of her reign, it is not stated that her whole life was one tissue of the same gross falsehood whenever she deemed it for her interest, or felt it suited her caprices, to practise artifices as pitiful as they were clumsy. But a graver charge than dissimulation and severity as regards her connection with the history of Mary is entirely suppressed, and yet the foul crime is described in the same work. It is undeniable that Elizabeth did not cause her to be executed until she had repeatedly endeavoured to make Sir Amyas Paulett and Sir Drue Drury, who had the custody of her person, take her off by assassination. When those two gallant cavaliers rejected the infamous proposition with indignation and with scorn, she attacked them as "dainty" and "precise fellows," "men promising much and performing nothing;" nay, she was with difficulty dissuaded from displacing them, and employing one Wingfield in their stead, "who had both courage and inclination to strike the blow." Then finding she could not commit murder, she signed the warrant for Mary's execution; and immediately perpetrated a crime only less foul than murder, treacherously denying her handwriting, and destroying by heavy fine and long imprisonment the Secretary of State whom she had herself employed to issue the fatal warrant. History, fertile in its records of royal crimes, offers to our reprobation few such characters as that of this great, successful, and popular princess. An assassin in her heart, nay, in her councils and her orders; an oppressor of the most unrelenting cruelty in her whole conduct; a hypocritical dissembler, to whom falsehood was habitual, honest frankness strange —such is the light in which she ought to be ever held up, as long as humanity and truth shall bear any value

in the eyes of men. That she rendered great services to her subjects; that she possessed extraordinary firmness of character as a sovereign, with despicable weakness as a woman; that she governed her dominions with admirable prudence, and guided her course through as great difficulties in the affairs of the state, and still more in those of the church, as beset the path of any who ever ruled—is equally incontrovertible; but there is no such thing as "right of set-off" in the judgments which impartial history has to pronounce—no doctrine of compensation in the code of public morals; and he who undertakes to record the actions of princes, and to paint their characters, is not at liberty to cast a veil over undeniable imperfections, or suffer himself like the giddy vulgar to be so dazzled by glory that his eyes are blind to crime.*

A few months previous to the publication of his 'History,' Dr. Robertson, who had before received the degree of Doctor in Divinity from the University of Edinburgh, removed to that city, being presented to the kirk of the Old Grey Friars. In 1759 he was made one of the chaplains royal, a sinecure in the Scotch Church; in 1762 he was appointed Principal of the University; and a proposition was now made, proceeding from the King through his favourite minister, Lord Bute, who communicated it to Lord Cathcart, and he to the Principal, that if he would undertake to write the History of England, every source of information which the government could command would be laid open to his researches, and such provision settled upon him as might enable him to bestow his

* Hume's highly-wrought character of Elizabeth, perhaps the finest of all his historical portraits, is liable to the same grave objection; somewhat mitigated by the circumstance that he seemed to lend less implicit credence to Davidson's testimony against her than Robertson does. It is singular that neither historian has remarked in Mary's vindication the undoubted right she had, without committing an offence against the law or against morals, to join in any measures of hostility against Elizabeth, who held her in an illegal custody.

whole attention and time upon this important work without the interruptions occasioned by his professional duties. This plan was so far favourably received that he expressed his willingness now to undertake the subject, as he could not any longer come into conflict with his friend Mr. Hume, whose work would have been all published many years before the new 'History' could appear. His former objection of Mr. Hume's 'History' being then in progress when a similar plan was pressed upon him by the booksellers had thus been removed; and though he declined on any account to lay down his clerical character, and withdraw from his station in the church, he had yet no objection, if he could still retain his connexion with that venerated establishment, to be relieved from the parochial labours connected with the cure of souls; and provided Edinburgh should continue to be his place of residence, he purposed passing each year two or three months in London, for the benefit of the collections offered to be placed at his service. It is probable that the retirement of Lord Bute from office, which happened soon after, put an end to this important negotiation; important in a very high degree to the literature, and, indeed, to the constitutional interests of the country. Nothing more seems to have resulted from the correspondence except the reviving in his favour the place of historiographer for Scotland, to which he was appointed in 1764. But who that values the accuracy of historical narration, and sets a right estimate upon the benefits derived to our political system from a thorough investigation of the records and the events of former times, during which our mixed government was slowly formed and gradually matured, can avoid deeply lamenting that the subject of English history had not fallen into the hands of him who was, by a competent judge, though a rival author, justly called "the most diligent and most faithful of penmen?" We should

then have possessed a work of which the brilliant outside gloss being sustained by the intrinsic value of the coin, it would no longer have been necessary for the student to read one narrative for its dramatic effect, while he sought in another the real facts of the story, and to refuse giving the first praise of an historian to the first master of historical composition. Nor would the acquisition of an English history, at once readable and credible, have been purchased by the sacrifice of the other works with which this great writer, after the failure of the treaty, enriched our literature. It was part of the conditions which he imposed that he should first be allowed to finish his 'Charles V.'; and when we reflect on ten years having elapsed after he finished his 'America,' without resuming his pen, there seems no reason to doubt that he could have written this and the English history also during the period between 1769, when 'Charles' was published, and 1789, when he began the 'Disquisition on Ancient India.' The failure of the treaty, therefore, is a matter of unmingled regret; and is one of the worst of the many mischiefs which we owe to the English plan of conducting government by the conflict of adverse parties, with the consequence almost necessarily flowing from it, of all the principles, and all the measures, and all the designs of one ministry becoming, as a matter of course, an object of suspicion, and even of dislike, to their successors.

It is probable that he did not begin his second work for some little time after the publication of the first; but from the correspondence just now referred to, we learn that in July, 1762, a third part of it was finished, and that he reckoned two years more sufficient for its completion. In this he was deceived, whether it be that he underrated the labour required by the portion of his task still before him, or that he was interrupted in it (as has been supposed) by the fierce dissensions which during that period raged in the Scottish Church,

and which must no doubt have occupied some portion of his leisure, though with so severe an economist of his time, and a mind so little liable to be disturbed, there seems hardly any reason to think that these proceedings could seriously distract his attention from his studies for any considerable portion of the year. At length the public impatience was gratified by the appearance of the work in 1769, exactly ten years after his 'Scotland.' Its success was not a matter of doubt, and it fully answered the expectations which had naturally been formed. The prevailing opinion places this work at the head of his writings; and certainly, if the extent and importance of the subject be regarded, and the great value be considered of a clear and distinct narrative, embracing the history of Europe during the period when its different states assumed the position with relation to each other in which they now stand, and most of them also adopted the political system which is established for the government of their several affairs, there can be no comparison between this and any other of his works; to which must doubtless be added, the far greater difficulty of executing so vast a plan, tracing the complicated parts of the great European commonwealth in their connexion with each other, and drawing, as Mr. Stewart has happily expressed it, a meridian line through modern history, to which all the branches of separate annals may be referred. But though the same felicitous narrative is in this work to be always found, and though the first book contains the most perfect example of general or philosophical history anywhere to be seen, yet I hesitate greatly in preferring it as an historical composition to either its predecessor or its immediate successor. There are more remarkable beauties of a purely historical kind in both of these, according to my humble judgment. As a whole, as a history of a country for a given period, I am much disposed to place his 'Scotland' first; while I con-

ceive that the 'America' presents particular passages, feats of narrative excellence, unrivalled by anything in either of the other works, perhaps not to be matched, and certainly not exceeded, by any other historical composition of any age.

In proof of this last position I will refer to the fascinating account of Cortez's arrival at Mexico, and of his subsequent bold and masterly, though most cruel and profligate measures; to the romantic history of Pedro de la Gasca's quelling by his individual wisdom and firmness the great rebellion of Peru; but, above all, to the grand event, the most important recorded in the annals of our race, the discovery of the New World by Columbus. The skill with which this last narrative is managed, and the conduct of the story, may truly be pronounced matchless. I am now speaking merely of the composition. The dramatic effect of the whole is extraordinary. We are at first interested in Columbus's sagacity, and boldness, and science, by which he was led, through a course of private study and contemplation, to form the adventurous and novel opinion that the East Indies could be reached by steering a westerly course from Europe across the Atlantic. His difficulties in obtaining the assent of his contemporaries to so strange a doctrine are then described, and our interest in his theory is increased. But the successive obstacles which he had to encounter in his efforts to obtain the assistance of various sovereigns, that he might be enabled to test his theory by navigating the unknown and pathless ocean, wind up our anxiety to the highest pitch. We follow him to the Genoese senate, to the court of Portugal, to England, whither he had despatched his brother, whose strange adventures among pirates and his utter indigence in London, where he subsisted by selling maps till he could scrape together enough to purchase decent clothes to appear in before Henry VII.,—form a striking episode in the narrative. Finally, we have his own arrival in

Spain, and his constant repulses for twelve long years in all his attempts to make that country the richest and most glorious on the face of the earth. All these wanderings and disappointments for so vast a portion of this great man's life create a breathless impatience for his success, when our wishes are at length crowned by the warm support of his steady patroness Isabella; and he finally sets sail on the 3rd of August, 1492.—Such is the man whose fortunes we are to follow, now far past the middle age, for he was in his fifty-sixth year, of which above twenty had been spent in preparing for his magnificent enterprise; but full of the vigour of youth, in the height of his powerful faculties, and inspired with the sanguine temper which enables genius to work its wonders.

The voyage is related with absolute clearness in all its nautical details, which are given so as to fix our attention without wearying it, and elucidate the narrative without encumbering it. But in the incidents of the passage we take the greatest interest, placed, as we feel ourselves to be, in the position of the navigators, to whom every occurrence was of moment, because everything was of necessity new. Their conduct and their feelings, however, occupy us still more; for beside our sympathy with them, upon them the fate of the great enterprise depends.

But one figure ever stands out from the group; it is the great Captain who guides the voyage through the unknown ocean, and whom we all the while feel by anticipation to be piercing through the night of ages to bring into acquaintance with each other the old world and the new. Upon his steady courage, undismayed by the dark uncertainty of all his steps, upon his fortitude which no peril can shake, his temper unruffled by all opposition, upon his copious resources under every difficulty, we dwell with the most profound attention; sometimes hardly venturing to hope for his successful conquest over so many difficulties.

The voyage meanwhile proceeds, and the distance from any known portion of the world becomes tremendous, while nothing but sea and air is on all hands to be discerned. At length some slight indications of approach to land begin to be perceived; but so slight that universal despondency creates a general resistance, breaking out into actual mutiny. Our anxiety for the result, and our interest in the great admiral, is now wound up to the highest pitch, when he obtains a promise of his crew persevering, "watching with him" yet three days. The indications of land being not far off now become less doubtful; and from among them are selected the more striking, closing with this picturesque passage:—"The sailors aboard the Nina took up the branch of a tree with red berries, perfectly fresh. The clouds around the setting sun assumed a new appearance; the air was more mild and warm, and during the night the wind became unequal and variable." When we are thus in painful suspense, comes the crowning victory—at once of the great navigator who has happily traced the unknown ocean, and of the great historian who has strictly pursued his path, but so as to give the well-known truth all the interest and all the novelty of a romantic tale now first told.

I beg any one who thinks these remarks overrate his merit, to mark the exquisite texture of the following sentences, in which the grand result, the development of the whole, is given; and to mark the careful simplicity of the diction, the self-concealed art of the master, and his admirable selection of particulars, by which we, as it were, descend and perch upon the deck of the great admiral:—"From all these symptoms Columbus was so confident of being near land, that on the evening of the 11th of October, after public prayers for success, he ordered the sails to be furled, and the ships to lie-to, keeping strict watch, lest they should be driven on shore in the night. During this

interval of suspense and expectation no man shut his eyes; all kept upon deck, gazing intently towards that quarter whence they expected to discern the land which had been so long the object of their wishes." It is a judicious thing, though it seems trivial, that he here breaks off, as it were, and begins a new paragraph; and mark well its structure:—

"About two hours before midnight Columbus, standing on the forecastle, observed a light at a distance, and privately pointed it out to Pedro Guttierez, a page of the queen's wardrobe. Guttierez perceived it, and calling to Salcedo, comptroller of the fleet, all three saw it in motion, as if it were carried from place to place. A little after midnight the joyful sound of *Land! Land!* was heard from the Pinta, which kept always ahead of the other ships. But having been so often deceived by fallacious appearances, every man now became slow of belief, and waited in all the anguish of uncertainty and impatience for the return of day. As soon as the morning dawned, all doubts and fears were dispelled. From every ship an island was seen about two leagues to the north, whose flat and verdant fields, well stored with wood, and watered with many rivulets, presented the aspect of a delightful country. The crew of the Pinta instantly began the *Te Deum*, as a hymn of thanksgiving to God, and were joined by those of the other ships, with tears of joy and transports of congratulation. This office of gratitude to Heaven was followed by an act of justice to their commander. They threw themselves at the feet of Columbus with feelings of self-condemnation mingled with remorse. They implored him to pardon their ignorance, incredulity, and injustice, which had created him so much unnecessary disquiet, and had so often obstructed the execution of his well-concerted plan; and passing in the warmth of their admiration from one extreme to another, they now pronounced the man whom they had so lately reviled and threat-

ened, to be a person inspired by Heaven with sagacity and fortitude more than human in order to accomplish a design so far beyond the ideas and conception of all former ages."

In like manner is the landing and the meeting with the natives painted rather than described. The impression made, for instance, by the Spaniards on the minds of these simple folk shows that the great writer can place himself in the position of the savage as well as the sage. "The vast machines in which they had traversed the ocean, that seemed to move upon the waters with wings, and uttered a dreadful sound like thunder, accompanied with lightning and smoke, struck them with such terror, that they began to respect their new guests as a superior order of beings, and concluded that they were children of the sun, who had descended to visit the earth."

The simple language of these passages, to make but one observation, is remarkable; and their dignity is with this perfect plainness perfectly sustained. It is always in such language that a master of diction will make his impression; and the near approach of any catastrophe, whether awful or pathetic, may always be suspected when the language becomes very simple, and the particulars begin to abound. There is but one word above the most homely style of the most ordinary conversation in all that I have cited. The fields are "verdant," not green; and this word is correctly chosen for the rhythm, which would not allow a monosyllable. Possibly "descend" was unnecessary; "come down" would have been sufficiently sustained. The technical words "lie-to" and "ahead" were in like manner necessary, because there is ridicule attached to speaking of a ship "stopping," or one being before another, as on the road; besides that these phrases have been imported from nautical language, and are now naturalized on shore.

The effect which this passage is calculated to pro-

duce on readers of understanding and of feeling was once remarkably seen by me, when I made my illustrious and venerated friend Lord Wellesley attend to it. He told me next day that he had never been so much moved by any modern writing; that he had shed tears while he read it, and that it had broken his rest at night.

If the word dramatic has been applied to this narrative, it has been advisedly chosen; because no one can doubt that, with the most scrupulous regard to the truth, and even to the minute accuracy of history, this composition has all the beauties of a striking poem. To judge of its merits in this respect, I will not compare or rather contrast it with the Histories of Oviedo, or Herrera, or Ferdinand Columbus, or even with the far better composition of Dr. Campbell, or whoever wrote the history of the discovery in Harris's 'Bibliotheca Itinerantium,'* nor yet with the ambitious but worse written narrative of Mr. Washington Irving, in his 'Life and Voyages of Columbus;'† but I will

* This work, in two folio volumes, contains some admirable historical pieces. Burke's 'European Settlements' is very much taken from it. I refer to the edition of 1740, by Dr. Campbell, whose acquaintance Dr. Robertson appears by his 'Letters' above cited to have had great pleasure in making when he visited London.

† It is no part of my intention to underrate the merits of this very popular author; but I speak of the manner in which he has treated the subject; and coming after so great a master, it was not judicious in him to try for effect, instead of studying the chaste simplicity of his predecessor. These are a few of his expressions:—The ships "were ploughing the waves;" Columbus was "wrapped in the shades of night;" he "maintained an intense watch;" he "ranged his eye along the dusky horizon;" he beheld "suddenly a glimmering light." Robertson had never thought of saying "suddenly," as knowing that light must of necessity be sudden. Then the light has "passing gleams;" his feelings "must have been tumultuous and intense," contrary to the fact, and to the character of the man; "the great mystery of the ocean was revealed;" "what a bewildering crowd of conjectures thronged on his mind!" All this speculation of the writer to insure the effect, Dr. Robertson rejects as fatal to effect, and gives only what actually happened. Finally, he was possibly to find "the morning dawn upon spicy groves, and glittering fanes, and gilded cities." Surely no one can hesitate which of the two pictures to prefer. If the one is not absolutely tawdry, the other is assuredly more chaste.

refer to a poetical work composed purely for effect, and of which the author was at full liberty to indulge his fancy in selecting, or indeed in imagining the facts and the scenes he represented. That author, too, is a poet of no mean fame, the late Mr. Southey, who has sung the discovery of America by Madoc; and his verse is much less fine, and as a poem, than the history which I have been asking the reader to contemplate. The poet leaves out all the most picturesque matters, the truly poetical matters; and instead of them all, after a mutiny he raises a storm, which so cripples the ships that the seamen cannot sail back if they would. All he says of the discovery is, that the commander watched upon deck till dawn, and then saw the distant land arise like a grey cloud from the ocean. He also makes the sea shallow, though at such distance as that the land looks like a cloud. It really should seem as if he had refrained from looking at Robertson's 'History' because he was to write a poem on the subject, as he tells us he did from reading Voltaire's poem before, and, indeed, also after he wrote 'Joan of Arc.'

There is one reflection which arises very naturally on examining the rare excellence of such narratives as that of Pedro de la Gasca and Columbus's voyage.

To compare the two pieces of workmanship is a good lesson, and may tend to cure a vitiated taste (Book iii. chap. 3.) To take only one instance: —"About two hours before midnight, Columbus, standing on the forecastle, observed a light at a distance, and privately pointed it out to Pedro," &c. Thus Robertson. Irving says, "Wrapped from observation in the shades of night, he maintained an intense and unremitting watch, ranging his eye along the dusky horizon. Suddenly, about ten o'clock, he thought he beheld a light glimmering at a distance." Can any one doubt which of the two passages is the most striking—the chaste and severe, or the ornamented and gaudy and meretricious? The account of Robertson makes the ships lie-to all night. Irving either makes them lie-to, and afterwards go on sailing rapidly, or the lying-to was the night before, and they sailed quicker the nearer they came to land, and in the dusk. The one makes them only see the shore after dawn; the other makes them see it two leagues off, in a dark night, at two in the morning, within the tropics.

The subject of the latter is altogether free from war-like interest; of the former, nearly so; and of neither scene is the effect at all heightened by the vices or the excesses of the actors. Then who can find any more interesting narrative of events where great crimes are the subject, and who can doubt that the same pen which could so admirably paint the scenes, peaceful and guiltless, which form the subject of such historical pictures, could in like manner have lent an interest to others of a like kind, without exalting, at the expense of public virtue, the merits of wicked men? But if it be said that the quieting a great republic, or discovering a new hemisphere, are acts of such interest as lend themselves to the historian's pen, and are easily made to rivet our attention, surely the same pen which described them can represent even the wars that desolate the earth, and the crimes that disgrace humanity, in such colours as shall at once make us see the things perpetrated, and yet lament the wretchedness of the events, and execrate the cruelties or scorn the perfidies of the criminals, instead of making us, with a preposterous joy and a guilty admiration, exult in the occurrence of the one, and revere the memory of the other. Reference has been made already to the Plantagenet Prince and the Tudor Princess, so much the theme of admiration with historians for great capacity crowned with dazzling success. But why could not the diction of Hume and of Robertson have been employed for the far more worthy purpose of causing men to despise the intrigues and execrate the wars of such rulers? The same events had then studded their page, the same picturesque details given it striking effect, the same graphic colours added life to it, and yet the right feelings of the reader would have been exerted and cherished; nor would the historians have made themselves accomplices with the vulgar in the criminal award of applause and of fame, by which the wicked

actions of past times are rewarded, and the repetition of the same offences encouraged.

Historians, too, are capricious and uncertain in their panegyrics. Some princes of undoubted genius, of great courage, of singular skill in conquest and in government, nay, even who have rendered services to mankind, notwithstanding their vices, are set apart to be loaded with obloquy—quite just in their instance, but inconsistent enough with the suppression of all reprobation in other cases of less atrocity, indeed, yet of deep shades of guilt. The Borgia family are proverbial for profligacy and cruelty; yet both father and son showed talents of the highest order, to which the latter added great bravery, while the family were generous protectors of learning, especially of the study of jurisprudence, and do not seem to have misgoverned the people of their states more than others of the same age and country, their violence being exhausted on foreign princes and on their own feudal barons.* Of them, however, all anecdotes without evidence are believed. So the least credible stories of our Richard III. are easily received without proof, and he is universally regarded as a monster living in the habitual commission of murder; yet his capacity and his courage were universally admitted to be of the very highest order, and his reign conferred great advantages on the jurisprudence of England, while the nobles only, and not the community at large, suffered from his tyranny. Is it not somewhat inconsistent in the same historians who are so hostile to these great bad men that they can discover no merit in them, to be so dazzled by the battles of the Plantagenets and the policy of the Tudors that they can discover no blame in the sanguinary ambition of the one and the tyranny and perfidy of the other? Henry VIII., indeed, by his cruelty to his wives, has

* Livy's character of Hannibal has been, and not unjustly, likened by Hume to Guicciardini's account of Alexander VI.

been deprived of much palliation which otherwise his abilities and his accomplishments would have obtained for his despotic life, his numerous judicial murders actually perpetrated, as well as his plot for an ordinary assassination, that of Cardinal Beaton, only prevented by his own decease. But his daughter, who was as tyrannical to the full, and only restrained by the religious difficulties of her position, who was a model of falsehood in all its more hateful and despicable forms, who had all the guilt of murder on her head, and was only saved from its actual perpetration by having a Paulett for her agent, whom she would fain have suborned to commit it, instead of a Tyrrel, is loaded with the praise due to the most pure and virtuous of sovereigns, because she had talents and firmness and ruled successfully in difficult times.

It is not, however, merely by abstaining from indiscriminate praise, or by dwelling with disproportioned earnestness upon the great qualities, and passing lightly over the bad ones, of eminent men, and thus leaving a false general impression of their conduct, that historians err, and pervert the opinions and feelings of mankind. Even if they were to give a careful estimate of each character, and pronounce just judgment upon the whole, they would still leave by far the most important part of their duty unperformed, unless they also framed their narrative so as to excite our interest in the worthy of past times; to make us dwell with delight on the scenes of human improvement; to lessen the pleasure too naturally felt in contemplating successful courage or skill, whensoever these are directed towards the injury of mankind; to call forth our scorn of perfidious actions, however successful; our detestation of cruel and bloodthirsty propensities, however powerful the talents by which their indulgence was secured. Instead of holding up to our admiration the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," it is the historian's duty to make us

regard with unceasing delight the ease, worth, and happiness of blessed peace; he must remember that

> "Peace hath her victories,
> No less renown'd than War:" *

and to celebrate these triumphs, the progress of science and of art, the extension and security of freedom, the improvement of national institutions, the diffusion of general prosperity—exhausting on such pure and wholesome themes all the resources of his philosophy, all the graces of his style, giving honour to whom honour is due, withholding all incentives to misplaced interest and vicious admiration, and not merely by general remarks on men and on events, but by the manner of describing the one and recording the other, causing us to entertain the proper sentiments, whether of respect or of interest, or of aversion or of indifference, for the various subjects of the narration.

It is not to be denied, that history written in this spirit must differ materially from any of which we have as yet the experience: it is only to be lamented that those great masters, whose writings we have been contemplating, did not consecrate their mighty talents to so good a work. To the historians of all ages joining with the vulgar, and, indeed, writing as if they belonged themselves either to the class of ambitious warriors and intriguing statesmen, or to the herd of ordinary men whom successful crimes defrauded at once of their rights and their praises, may be ascribed by far the greater part of the encouragement held out to profligate conduct in those who have the destinies of nations in their hands. At all events, this is certain: if they could not eradicate the natural propensity in the human mind towards these errors when unrefined, they might have en-

* Milton.

lightened it, and have gradually diffused a sounder and better feeling.

Let us for a moment consider what the perpetrators of the greatest crimes that afflict humanity propose to themselves as their reward, for conquering other countries or oppressing their own. It is the enjoyment of power, or of fame, or of both. Unquestionably the renown of their deeds, their name being illustrious in their own day, and living after them in future ages, is, if not the uppermost thought, yet one that fills a large place in their minds. Surely if they were well assured that every writer of genius, or even of such merit as secured his page from oblivion, would honestly hold up to hatred and contempt acts of injustice, cruelty, treachery, whatever talents they might display, whatever success they might achieve, and that the opinion and the feeling of the world would join in thus detesting and thus despising, it is not too romantic a hope to indulge, that some practical discouragement might be given to those worst enemies of our species.

So deeply have I always felt the duty of attempting some such reformation in the historical character and practice, that I had begun to undertake the reigns of Henry V., of Elizabeth, and of Alfred, upon these great principles. A deep sense of the inadequate powers which I brought to this hard task, would probably have so far grown upon me as its execution advanced, that I should have abandoned it to abler hands; but professional, and afterwards judicial, duties put an end to the attempt before any considerable progress had been made. Nevertheless, I found no small reason to be satisfied of success being attainable, when I came narrowly to examine the interesting facts connected with national improvement and virtuous conduct; and I am sure, that whoever may repeat the attempt will gather encouragement in the proof, which I have drawn from the master-piece we

have been contemplating, that the events and characters of past times lend themselves to an affecting narrative, conducted on right principles.

The last work of Dr. Robertson, and which he published little more than two years before his death, was his 'Disquisition concerning India.' It is an able and most learned inquiry, critical and historical, into the knowledge of India possessed by the ancient nations who dwelt on the Mediterranean Sea. Nothing can be more unjust than the notion that this work is so incorrect, or grounded on information so imperfect, as to have been superseded by more full and accurate books since published. There is no doubt that the account of the native customs and manners given in the Appendix has been rendered less useful by the more copious details more recently obtained, and that some dispute has been made of the views which the author occasionally takes in that Appendix; but the Disquisition itself remains perfectly untouched by any controversy; and so far is it from having been superseded, that no other work has ever been since given to the world on the same subject. It is, from its accuracy, its knowledge of the ancient writings, its judicious reasoning and remarks, as well as its admirable composition, quite worthy of a place by the author's former and more celebrated writings; and it proves his great faculties to have continued in their entire vigour to the latest period of his life.

It remains to speak of Robertson's style. No one ever doubted of its great excellence; but it has sometimes been objected to as less idiomatic and more laboured than is consistent with the perfection of composition. The want of purely idiomatic expressions is the almost unavoidable consequence of provincial education and habits. Many forms of speech which are peculiarly English, are almost entirely unknown in the remote parts of the kingdom; many

which are perfectly pure and classical, a person living in Scotland would fear to use as doubting their correctness. That Robertson, however, had carefully studied the best writers, with a view to acquire genuine Anglicism, cannot be doubted. He was intimately acquainted with Swift's writings; indeed, he regarded him as eminently skilled in the narrative art. He had the same familiarity with Defoe, and had formed the same high estimate of his historical powers. I know, that when a Professor in another University consulted him on the best discipline for acquiring a good narrative style, previous to drawing up John Bell of Antermony's 'Travels across Russia to Tartary and the Chinese Wall,' the remarkable advice he gave him was to read 'Robinson Crusoe' carefully; and when the Professor was astonished, and supposed it was a jest, the historian said he was quite serious: but if 'Robinson Crusoe' would not help him, or he was above studying Defoe, then he recommended 'Gulliver's Travels.'

The works of Dr. Robertson involved him, as was to be expected, in some controversy of considerable violence; but as all men have done ample justice to his diligence in consulting his authorities, and as all candid men have testified to his strict impartiality, the attacks which were made upon him, and to which he never would offer any answer, proceeded from two unworthy sources—the bitter zeal of party, and the still more bitter enmity of personal spleen. The Jacobites have ever regarded Queen Mary's honour as an integral part of their political faith; and they could not forgive any one who, with whatever leaning towards a princess the victim of such cruel treatment, and the sufferer under misfortunes so long and so heavy, and with whatever disposition to free her from any charges unsupported by evidence, had yet performed faithfully his duty as an historian and as a moralist, of condemning profligate conduct, and ex-

posing gross imprudence amounting to absolute infatuation even if guilt be denied. Nothing could have satisfied the blind zeal of this faction, neither respectable from number, nor distinguished for ability, but acquitting Mary of every charge that she did not herself confess, and then approving of her marriage with the murderer of her husband within three months of his assassination. By far the ablest of the writings which the controversy produced, was the 'Inquiry' of Mr. Tytler, a lawyer by profession, a man of strong prejudices, but equally strong understanding, and a very diligent and accurate investigator of particular facts. The most learned, but the most repulsive from its dogmatism and its overbearing tone, was the 'Vindication' of Mr. Whittaker, a clergyman of the Church of England, settled in Cornwall, and remarkable for his industrious study of ancient British antiquities. With Mr. Hume Dr. Robertson likewise differed, but it was in an opposite direction: he could not yield to that able writer's arguments in proof of Mary's having been accessary to the Babington conspiracy; and though he minutely considered both the new evidence supposed to be printed in Murdin's 'State Papers' since the 'History of Scotland' was composed, and also carefully examined again all his authorities on the points on which he had been assailed by the Jacobite forces, yet, with the exception of a few unimportant errors or oversights, which he corrected, he adhered to his original statements, well weighed and maturely framed as they had in all instances been.

The personal resentment of a clever but unprincipled man was the cause of the most unworthy and unmeasured attacks, both on his 'Scottish History' and on his subsequent publications. Gilbert Stuart was a person of undoubted parts, but of idle habits and irregular life. An able and learned work, which he had published at a very early age, on the 'History of the British Constitution,' made the University of Edin-

burgh give him the degree of Doctor of Laws, when little more than one-and-twenty; and he soon after published his 'View of Society in Europe,' being an historical inquiry concerning laws, manners, and government. Immediately after this he was a candidate for the Professorship of Public Law, in the University, and he fancied that he owed his rejection to the influence of the Principal. Nothing could be more fitting than that such should be the case; for the life of Stuart was known to be that of habitual dissipation, in the intervals only of which he had paroxysms of study. To exclude such a person from the professor's chair would have been a duty incumbent upon the head of any university in Christendom, whatever, in other respects, might be his merits; but no admission was ever made by the Principal's friends that he had interfered, or indeed that the opinions and inclinations of the magistrates, who are the patrons, rendered any such interference necessary. But the disappointed candidate had no doubt upon the subject, and he set no bounds to his thirst of revenge. He repaired to London, where he became a writer in reviews, and made all the literary men of Edinburgh the subjects of his envious and malignant attacks, from 1768 to 1773; the editors of these journals, as is too usual with persons in their really responsible situation, but who think they can throw the responsibility upon their unknown contributors, never inquiring whether the criticisms which they published proceeded from the honest judgment or the personal spite of the writers.* He returned to Edinburgh, and set up a magazine and review, of which the scurrility, dictated by private resentments, was so unremitting that it

* It is the imperative duty of every one who conducts the periodical press, to use his utmost diligence in preventing *concealed* enemies or rivals from using his work as the vehicle of their attacks. He should lay down the rule never again to receive any contribution from a person who had deceived him, by suppressing the fact that he had a grudge or an interest against the object of his former attack.

brought the work to a close in less than three years, when he returned to London, and recommenced his anonymous vituperation of Scottish authors through the periodical press. He also published in 1779, 1780, and 1782, three works: one on the 'Constitutional History of Scotland,' being an attack on Dr. Robertson's first book; another on the 'History of the Reformation in Scotland,' and the third on the 'History of Queen Mary,' being also an elaborate attack upon the Principal. The ability and the learning of these works, and their lively and even engaging style, has not saved them from the oblivion to which they were justly consigned by the manifest indications prevailing throughout them all, of splenetic temper, of personal malignity, and of a constant disturbance of the judgment by these vile, unworthy passions.* The same hostility towards the person of the Principal even involved this reckless man in a quarrel with his eldest son; it led to a duel, in which neither party was hurt. An accommodation having taken place on the field, I have heard Stuart's second say that he was obliged, knowing his friend's intemperate habits, to oppose the proposal which he made with his usual want of conduct, and indeed of right feeling, that all the parties should dine together on quitting the field. That second, an able and an honourable man, always admitted Stuart's unjustifiable conduct towards the historian, one of whose nieces he (the second) after-

* Next to the Principal no one was more bitterly assailed than my late venerated friend and master, Dr. Adam, rector of the High School. His admirable 'Grammar' was received universally by the literary and didactic world (by the scholar as well as the teacher) with the approbation which it so well deserved. But it had one fault—it was on a subject on which Stuart's cousin, Ruddiman, had published a book. This was enough to enlist Stuart's ferocity against both the work and the writer. He published anonymous reviews without end, and he also published, under the name of Busby, a bitter attack upon the personal peculiarities of Dr. Adam. Every one felt unmingled disgust at such base and unprincipled proceedings, and the Rector, like the Principal, gave the unworthy author the mortification of leaving his assaults unanswered.

wards married. Stuart's dissipation continued unbroken, excepting by his occasional literary work, and he died of a dropsy, in 1786, at the early age of forty.

Others, far more deserving of attention, have raised an objection to the 'History of America,' from which it is difficult to defend it. There is induced by the narrative, in the mind of the reader, far too great sympathy with the conquerors of the New World. This may in part be palliated by the feeling so difficult for any historian to avoid, and which leads him to paint in interesting, if not in attractive colours, the deeds and the heroes of his story. But the atrocious crimes of those Spanish invaders, who, with a combination of fanatical violence and sordid avarice, subjugated or extirpated unoffending millions because of their pagan ignorance and their precious mines,—those bigoted furies who poured out the blood of men like water, in order to establish the Gospel of peace and good will towards man,—those monsters of cruelty, who, after wearying themselves with massacre, racked their invention for tortures, which might either glut their savage propensities or slake their execrable thirst of gold,—all ought to have called for reprobation, far more severe than any which the historian of their guilt has denounced against them. This is a great stain upon the work, and it can only be palliated by the excuse already offered,—an excuse by which the stain never can be wiped out.

After the Principal's publication of 'Charles V.,' and while he was writing the 'America,' no event of importance occurred in his life, which was tranquil and dignified, occupied only with his duties as head of the University, where the habitual deference of his colleagues rendered the administration of its concerns easy and prosperous, diversified also with his conduct

of the Scottish church, now under his guidance, unopposed by any rival. He occasionally visited London, where he was received by all the more distinguished characters, whether statesmen or men of letters, with the highest distinction; and the charms of his conversation, at once easy, lively, good-humoured, and yet perfectly dignified as became his sacred profession and his elevated position, added greatly to the interest that naturally arose from his literary renown.

In 1778, the concessions to the English and Irish Roman Catholics, by repealing the most oppressive parts of the penal laws, suggested to those of Scotland the obtaining a similar boon, or rather a similar act of justice. The Principal approved and supported their claims. An alarm was excited, and next year the Puritanical party in the General Assembly urged the adoption of a remonstrance against the proposed measure; but the Principal's salutary interference occasioned its rejection. The alarm was, however, stimulated by all the means to which the unscrupulous fury of religious faction has recourse; and so great a dread of violence was excited, that the Catholics at once abandoned their attempt. Their concessions, however, came too late to allay the popular ferment which the Puritans had raised; and a fanatical mob attacking the Protestant chapels at Edinburgh, burnt one and pulled down another, then, proceeding to the college, were about to assail the Principal's house, which they beleaguered, with the most savage imprecations against him, but having had notice of their approach he had withdrawn his family, and a body of soldiers stationed there saved the building and the rest of the university. At the next Assembly in 1780 he made a speech of singular eloquence, declaring his unaltered opinion on the justice of the measure, but adding that before the riots he had been disposed to recommend a postponement of it until time should be given to enlighten the public mind, and free it from the gross delusions under

which it had been brought through the acts of unprincipled men. This speech is given with tolerable fulness in the Scotch Magazine for that year, and it justifies the exalted opinion traditionally entertained of the Principal's oratory. He declared on this occasion of importance his intention to withdraw from public life, and stated that his friends well knew this resolution had been taken some time before the late controversy.

Nothing memorable occurred to this eminent and virtuous person after the period to which reference has now been made. A matrimonial alliance between his eldest daughter and Mr. Brydone, the celebrated traveller, a gentleman, too, known for his scientific pursuits, as well as distinguished for his amiable manners and kindness of disposition, had contributed materially to her father's happiness; and he liked to pass a few weeks in the summer or autumn at the delightful residence of Lennel on the southern border, where that excellent person lived, and where as late as 1814 he ended his days.

In the autumn of 1791 the Principal's health first began to fail, and a jaundice, proceeding from an affection of the liver, brought him early in 1793 to a state of weakness which left no hope of his recovery. He bore his infirmity with entire patience, and beheld the prospect of death, which was for many months before him, with unshaken fortitude. A month or two previous to his decease, he was removed to Grange House, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. Professor Stewart there saw him more than once; and far from avoiding the subject, he said it would be satisfactory to him that his friend should write the account of his life—it being, according to the usage of the Royal Society (of Edinburgh), customary to give in their 'Transactions' the lives of deceased members who have attained distinction by their works. On another occasion an observation was

made on the fruit-trees then in blossom; and he alluded, with cheerful composure, to the event which must happen before they came to their maturity, and prevent him who now looked upon the flower from seeing the fruit. His strength of body gradually declining, though his mind remained quite entire, he died on the 11th June, 1793, in the 72nd year of his age. His funeral in the Grey Friars church-yard was attended by the professors, the magistrates of the city, the heads of the law, and many of the other respectable inhabitants of Edinburgh. It was, as I can testify, a scene peculiarly impressive to all who witnessed it, from the sterling virtue as well as the great celebrity and intrinsic merits of the illustrious deceased.

The history of the author is the history of the individual, excepting as regards his private life and his personal habits: these were in the most perfect degree dignified and pure. Without anything of harshness or fanaticism, he was rationally pious and blamelessly moral. His conduct, both as a Christian minister, as a member of society, as a relation, and as a friend, was wholly without a stain. His affections were warm, they were ever under control, and therefore equal and steady. His feelings might pass for being less strong and lively than they were, partly because he had an insuperable aversion to extremes in all things, partly because, for fear of any semblance of pretension, to which he was yet more averse, he preferred appearing less moved than he really was, in order to avoid the possibility of feeling less than he externally showed. But he was of opinions respecting conduct which led to keeping the feelings under curb, and never giving way to them; he leant in this towards the philosophy and discipline of the Stoics; and he also held, which was apt to beget the same mistake as to the warmth of his heart, that exhibitions of sorrow, any more than of boisterous mirth, were

unfit to be made; that such emotions should as far as possible be reduced to moderation, even in private; but that in society they were altogether misplaced and mistimed. He considered, and rightly considered, that if a person labouring under any afflictive feelings be well enough at ease to go into company, he gives a sort of pledge that he is so far recovered of his wound, or at least can so far conceal his pains, as to behave like the rest of the circle. He held, and rightly held, that men frequent society, not to pour forth their sorrows, or indulge their unwieldy joys, but to instruct, or improve, or amuse each other, by rational and cheerful conversation. For himself, when he left his study, leaving behind him, with the dust of his books, the anxious look, the wrinkled brow, the disturbed or absent thoughts, he also expected others to greet his arrival with the like freedom from cares of all sorts, and especially he disliked to have his hours of relaxation saddened with tales of misery, interesting to no one, unless, which is never the object of such narratives, there be a purpose of obtaining relief.

His conversation was cheerful, and it was varied. Vast information, copious anecdote, perfect appositeness of illustration,—narration or description wholly free from pedantry or stiffness, but as felicitous and as striking as might be expected from such a master—great liveliness, and often wit and often humour, with a full disposition to enjoy the merriment of the hour, but the most scrupulous absence of everything like coarseness of any description—these formed the staples of his talk. One thing he never tolerated any more than he did the least breach of decorum; it was among the few matters which seemed to try his temper—he could not bear evil speaking, or want of charity. No one was likely ever to wrangle with another before him; but he always put down at once any attempt to assail the absent. His own nature

was singularly charitable and kindly; he always viewed the conduct of others in the least unfavourable light; and when he heard any objections urged, he would suggest something that at least left the blame mitigated when it could not be warded off or made doubtful. Of course, this remark applies to cases where the matter was ambiguous, and the general character and conduct were good. No man ever expressed a greater abhorrence of anything plainly bad, or a nobler scorn of anything mean; and his sentence went forth in such cases with an awful and an overpowering force.

His very decided opinions on all subjects of public interest, civil and religious, never interrupted his friendly and familiar intercourse with those who held different principles. With his colleague as minister, Dr. Erskine, leader of his antagonists in the Church, he lived upon terms of uninterrupted friendship, as that great presbyter most feelingly testified on preaching his funeral sermon. With Mr. Hume his intimacy is well known. His political principles were those of a moderate Whig, a Whig of 1688, as he used to express it; but no man held in greater contempt the petty manœuvres of party. Horace Walpole has thought fit to record a dialogue as having passed between them, in which he makes the Principal say, "You must know, sir, that I am a moderate Whig;" and himself answer, "Yes, Doctor, a very moderate Whig, I'll engage for it"—a sneer not likely to have been risked by such an amateur with such an artist. When the great historian used the word "moderate," he plainly intended to guard himself against being supposed to enter into the squabbles of faction, and partake of its blind fury in a degree unsuited to his station. On religious matters he ever expressed himself with solemnity and warmth. While he was wishing well to liberty in France, before the excesses that profaned its name,

and indeed before the revolution broke out, he was deploring the irreligious tone of French literature: "Really," said he, "one would think we were living under a new dispensation." Of American independence he was the warm friend; but Washington's character was far more to his mind than Franklin's, of whom, for his violence, and for his contempt of revealed religion, he had formed a very unfavourable opinion.

His manner was not graceful in little matters, though his demeanour was dignified on the whole. In public it was unimpassioned till some great burst came from him; then it partook of the fire of the moment, and soon relapsed into dignified composure. In private it had some little awkwardness not very perceptible except to a near and minute observer. His language was correct and purely English, avoiding both learned words and foreign phraseology and Scottish expressions, but his speech was strongly tinged with the Scottish accent. His voice I well remember, nor was it easy to forget it; nothing could be more pleasing. It was full and it was calm, but it had a tone of heartiness and sincerity which I hardly ever knew in any other. He was in person above the middle size—his features were strongly marked—his forehead was high and open—the expression of his mouth was that of repose, of meditation, and of sweetness at the same time. The portrait, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, is a striking likeness, and it is the one which is engraved. I never knew an instance, I should say, of so strong a resemblance as that which his eldest daughter, Mrs Brydone, bore to him. In her latter years, too, the sound of her voice was nearly his own. The only particulars of his manners and person which I recollect are his cocked hat, which he always wore, even in the country: his stately gait, particularly in a walk which he loved to frequent in the woods at Brougham, where I attended him once while he visited there, and in which he slowly recited sometimes Latin verses, some-

times Greek; a very slight guttural accent in his speech, which gave it a peculiar fullness; and his retaining some old-fashioned modes of address, as using the word "madam" at full length; and, when he drank wine with any woman, adding, "My humble service to you." When in the country he liked to be left entirely to himself in the morning, either to read or to walk or to drive about; and he said that one of his great enjoyments at Lennel was Mr. Brydone and himself doing precisely each as he chose, and being each as if the other were not in the same house.

To give any notion of the anecdotes, simple, racy, unpretending, which he would introduce when perfectly apposite to the subject matter, would not be easy. Good nature and good humour prevailed through his conversation, in which there was nothing ambitious or forced, or any thing to show a desire of display. It always seemed as if he merely wished to enjoy himself, and contribute his share to the enjoyment of others. The late Lord Meadowbank, a kinsman of his, and indeed his ward, when preparing his Lectures on General History, of which he was Professor, asked him if he had ever remarked how very superficial Mr. Hume's Anglo-Saxon period is, more so than the other parts, though the last written, of his 'History?' "Why, yes, I have," said the Principal; "but the truth is, David (so he always called him) had the most unfortunate thing happen to him that can befall an author —he was paid for it before he wrote it."

APPENDIX.

I.

ADDRESS OF PRINCIPAL ROBERTSON ON LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE EDINBURGH COLLEGE, 1791.—(LORD NAPIER WAS THE GRAND MASTER OF THE MASONS.)

"MY LORD,

"From very humble beginnings the University of Edinburgh has attained to such eminence as entitles it to be ranked among the most celebrated seminaries of learning. Indebted to the bounty of several of our sovereigns; distinguished, particularly, by the gracious prince now seated on the British throne, whom, with gratitude, we reckon amongst the most munificent of our royal benefactors; and cherished by the continued attention and good offices of our honourable patrons,* this University can now boast of the number and variety of its institutions for the instruction of youth in all the branches of literature and science.

"With what integrity and discernment persons have been chosen to preside in each of these departments, the character of my learned colleagues affords the most satisfying evidence. From confidence in their abilities and assiduity in discharging the duties of their respective offices, the University of Edinburgh has not only become a seat of education to youth in every part of the British dominions, but, to the honour of our country, students have been attracted to it from almost every nation in Europe, and every state in America.

"One thing still was wanting. The apartments appropriated for the accommodation of professors and students were so extremely unsuitable to the flourishing state of the University, that it had long been the general wish to have buildings more decent and convenient erected. What your Lordship has now done gives a near prospect of having this

* The magistrates of the city.

wish accomplished; and we consider it as a most auspicious circumstance that the foundation stone of this new mansion of science is laid by your Lordship, who, among your ancestors, reckon a man whose original and inventive genius places him high among the illustrious persons who have contributed most eminently to enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge.

"Permit me to add what I regard as my own peculiar felicity, that, by having remained in my present station much longer than any of my predecessors, I have lived to witness an event so beneficial to this University, the prosperity of which is near to my heart, and has ever been the object of my warmest wishes.

"May the Almighty God, without the invocation of whom no action of importance should be begun, bless this undertaking, and enable us to carry it on with success: may He continue to protect our University, the object of whose institutions is to instil into the minds of youth principles of sound knowledge, to inspire them with the love of religion and virtue, and to prepare them for filling the various stations in society with honour to themselves, and with benefit to their country. All this we ask in the name of Christ; and unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we ascribe the kingdom, power, and glory.—Amen."

LETTER OF THE LATE PROFESSOR FERGUSON, THEN IN HIS NINETY-SECOND YEAR, TO THE LATE LORD ROBERTSON, ON THE SUBJECT OF HIS FATHER'S EPITAPH.

"MY DEAR LORD, "ST. ANDREWS, Nov. 24th, 1814.

"I have received your letter, enclosing the two copies of the inscription on your father's monument, one for Mr. Dempster, which I have delivered, and know his sense of your kind remembrance, as well as my own of the honour you have done me. In these acknowledgments I am afraid you will think me all too slow; but this is now the mode of my existence, and ill qualified to change it.

"It has enabled me to communicate with some of the learned here, who join me in applauding the elegance and the appropriate terms of that composition.

"The authority of Dr. Gregory has no need of such supports; but I am fond to mention it.

"I thought your father's birth and mine had been more nearly dated; but I see that his preceded mine by two whole years, although I have survived so long to become my own monument—perishing you will say, but only more so, or less permanent, than some other grave-stones. I remember to have seen in Italy miles and leagues of ancient highways, strewed on right and left with continual vestiges of monuments, now destroyed or in ruins, with scarce a name to mark for whom they were intended; but your father's memory is independent of any such materials. More fortunate than Tacitus or Livy, his works entire remain for ages indefinite, to show that in his time the British style in able hands was fit to emulate or cope with theirs. It were too much vanity for me to think the opportunity will then exist of giving judgment how little I had profited by the example which he set me, of literary talents and intellectual eminence. My way is now directed to the trackless grave, and there my course should terminate, but for the happy thought that there is somewhat after death to which this nursery and school of human life is no more than a preparation or a prelude. Meantime, however, I remain, with just esteem and gratitude for kind attentions,

"Your most obliged and most humble servant,

"ADAM FERGUSON.

"The Right Honourable Lord Robertson,
Edinburgh."

The translation, of which the following forms the first two pages of the Principal's MS., was made, as appears by the date January 21, 1742, when he was about twenty—he having been born 19th September, 1721. The whole is carefully and admirably executed, combining clearness with elegance. The other translations which I have seen of the 'Meditations,' will bear no comparison with this; Gataker's (1692) in Latin seems the best, but it is not good. To give an example, take the first paragraph: το καλοηθες is rendered by the translation of 1692 "to be gentle and meek;" by Mr. Graves's, of 1792, "virtuous disposition of mind." αοργητον, by the former "to refrain from all anger

and passion;" by the latter "habitual command of my temper." Robertson gives both together clearly and elegantly, "to be of a complaisant and dispassionate temper of mind." καλοηθες is a word only found in Antoninus. Stephanus renders it "qui pulcrâ indole—probus—honestus;" the late editors of Passow, in their excellent work (Messrs. Liddell and Scott), have rendered it "well disposed:" Gataker (1692), "moris candidi." Robertson's version seems preferable, though not widely different. In the second paragraph we have αιδημον rendered, unhappily enough, by the edition of 1692, "shamefacedness," as ανδρειον is "manly behaviour;" while Graves gives both prolixly "modesty and manly firmness on all occasions." In paragraph 16 we find ἡμερον και μενετικον ασαλευτως, the first word of which the edition of 1692 gives as "meekness;" the edition of 1792, "mild condescension," which is a fanciful version; the Oxford Greek-Latin edition of 1704, "mansuetudinem;" and Robertson, "mild disposition."

Book I.

"Jan. 21, 1742.

"I. From my grandfather, Verus, I learned to be of a complaisant and dispassionate temper of mind.

"II. By the fame and reputation of my father I was taught to be modest, and yet at the same time to form steady and manly resolutions.

"III. By my mother I was taught to be of a religious turn of mind; and not only to abstain from all evil actions, but from every inclination towards them; to study simplicity in my diet, and keep at a distance from all the vain pomp of riches.

"IV. By my great grandfather I was advised not to frequent the public schools of declaimers; but to hear the best masters in private, and to spare no expense in procuring such.

"V. By my governor I was taught to take no side in those factions which divide the Circus and Theatre; to be patient of labour, to be content with little, and to be able to work with my own hands; not to meddle in other men's matters, and to discourage all informers.

"VI. By Diognetus I was taught not to amuse myself

with empty, trifling studies, not to give credit to the marvellous stories related of wizards, enchanters, and the exorcising of dæmons; not to spend my time in the breeding of quails and such like trifles; to endure it patiently when men speak freely of me, and to apply myself wholly to the study of philosophy. By his advice I heard Bacchius, Tyndarides, and Marcianus, and, when very young, employed myself in composing dialogues; used a mean bed, covered only with a skin; and in every other thing emulated the manners of the Grecian philosophers.

"VII. To Rupheus I am indebted for my resolution of reforming and watching over my own morals, and that I did not fall into an imitation of the pride of the Sophists; that I did not write upon merely speculative points, or compose quaint and finical exhortations to virtue; that my exercises were not calculated to strike the fancy, and to carry with them an air of importance and austerity; that I applied myself neither to rhetoric nor poetry, nor studied any affected elegance in my expressions; that I did not wear the stola while within doors, and shunned all extravagant pride in my dress. By him I was taught to write my letters in a simple style, after the model of those he sent from Sinuessa; to show myself of a placable disposition towards those who have injured and offended me, and ready to be reconciled to them whenever they desire to return to my favour; to read with accuracy, not to be content with a superficial consideration of things, and not rashly to give ear to great talkers. To him, likewise, I owe my acquaintance with the Commentaries of Epictetus, which he furnished me with.

"VIII. From Apollonius I learned to be at the same time free, and yet without any fluctuating uncertainty in my resolutions; to have a regard to nothing beside reason, even in things of the smallest moment; to preserve an equal mind under the most acute pain, upon the death of a child, and during the most lingering diseases; and by a living example in himself, he showed me that it was possible for the same person to be upon occasion rigid or humane; that we should instruct others with mildness and gentleness, and look upon our erudition and dexterity in delivering speculative truths as among the meanest of qualifications. By

him also I was taught in what manner to receive presents from my friends, so as neither to appear too highly indebted to their favour, nor yet to dismiss them with cold indifference."

II.

Extracts from the 'Discourse of the Objects, Advantages, and Pleasures of Science,' prefixed to the Works of the Useful Knowledge Society.

[The doctrines here delivered are illustrated in the Lives of D'Alembert and Banks, as well as in that of Robertson.]

It may easily be demonstrated, that there is an advantage in learning, both for the usefulness and the pleasure of it. There is something positively agreeable to all men, to all at least whose nature is not most grovelling and base, in gaining knowledge for its own sake. When you see anything for the first time, you at once derive some gratification from the sight being new; your attention is awakened, and you desire to know more about it. If it is a piece of workmanship, as an instrument, a machine of any kind, you wish to know how it is made; how it works; and what use it is of. If it is an animal, you desire to know where it comes from; how it lives; what are its dispositions, and, generally, its nature and habits. You feel this desire, too, without at all considering that the machine or the animal may ever be of the least use to yourself practically; for, in all probability, you may never see them again. But you have a curiosity to learn all about them, because they are new and unknown. You accordingly make inquiries; you feel a gratification in getting answers to your questions, that is, in receiving information, and in knowing more—in being better informed than you were before. If you happen again to see the same instrument or animal, you find it agreeable to recollect having seen it formerly, and to think that you know something about it. If you see another instrument or animal, in some respects like, but differing in other particulars, you find it pleasing to compare them together, and to note in what they agree, and in what they differ. Now, all this kind of gratification is of a pure and

disinterested nature, and has no reference to any of the common purposes of life; yet it is a pleasure—an enjoyment. You are nothing the richer for it; you do not gratify your palate or any other bodily appetite; and yet it is so pleasing, that you would give something out of your pocket to obtain it, and would forego some bodily enjoyment for its sake. The pleasure derived from Science is exactly of the like nature, or, rather, it is the very same. For what has just been spoken of is, in fact, Science, which in its most comprehensive sense only means *Knowledge*, and in its ordinary sense means *Knowledge reduced to a System*; that is, arranged in a regular order, so as to be conveniently taught, easily remembered, and readily applied.

The practical uses of any science or branch of knowledge are undoubtedly of the highest importance; and there is hardly any man who may not gain some positive advantage in his worldly wealth and comforts, by increasing his stock of information. But there is also a pleasure in seeing the uses to which knowledge may be applied, wholly independent of the share we ourselves may have in those practical benefits. It is pleasing to examine the nature of a new instrument, or the habits of an unknown animal, without considering whether or not they may ever be of use to ourselves or to anybody. It is another gratification to extend our inquiries, and find that the instrument or animal is useful to man, even although we have no chance ourselves of ever benefiting by the information; as, to find that the natives of some distant country employ the animal in travelling:—nay, though we have no desire of benefiting by the knowledge; as, for example, to find that the instrument is useful in performing some dangerous surgical operation. The mere gratification of curiosity; the knowing more today than we knew yesterday; the understanding clearly what before seemed obscure and puzzling; the contemplation of general truths, and the comparing together of different things—is an agreeable occupation of the mind; and, beside the present enjoyment, elevates the faculties above low pursuits, purifies and refines the passions, and helps our reason to assuage their violence.

Now, these are the *practical* advantages of learning; but the *third* benefit is, when rightly considered, just as practical as the other two—the pleasure derived from mere knowledge, without any view to our own bodily enjoyments: and this applies to all classes, the idle as well as the industrious, if, indeed, it be not peculiarly applicable to those who enjoy the inestimable blessing of having time at their command. Every man is by nature endowed with the power of gaining knowledge; and the taste for it, the capacity to be pleased with it, forms equally a part of the natural constitution of his mind. It is his own fault, or the fault of his education, if he derives no gratification from it. There is a satisfaction in knowing what others know—in not being more ignorant than those we live with: there is a satisfaction in knowing what others do not know—in being more informed than they are. But this is quite independent of the pure pleasure of knowledge—of gratifying a curiosity implanted in us by Providence, to lead us towards the better understanding of the universe in which our lot is cast, and the nature wherewithal we are clothed. That every man is capable of being delighted with extending his information upon matters of science, will be evident from a few plain considerations.

Reflect how many parts of the reading, even of persons ignorant of all sciences, refer to matters wholly unconnected with any interest or advantage to be derived from the knowledge acquired. Every one is amused with reading a story; a romance may divert some, and a fairy tale may entertain others; but no benefit beyond the amusement is derived from this source: the imagination is gratified; and we willingly spend a good deal of time and a little money in this gratification, rather than in resting after fatigue, or any other bodily indulgence. So we read a newspaper, without any view to the advantage we are to gain from learning the news, but because it interests and amuses us to know what is passing. One object, no doubt, is to become acquainted with matters relating to the welfare of the country; but we also read the occurrences which do little or not at all regard the public interests, and we take a pleasure in reading them. Accidents, adventures, anecdotes, crimes, and a variety of other things amuse us, independent of the infor-

mation respecting public affairs, in which we feel interested as citizens of the state, or as members of a particular body. It is of little importance to inquire how and why these things excite our attention, and wherefore the reading about them is a pleasure: the fact is certain; and it proves clearly that there is a positive enjoyment in knowing what we did not know before: and this pleasure is greatly increased when the information is such as excites our surprise, wonder, or admiration. Most persons who take delight in reading tales of ghosts, which they know to be false, and feel all the while to be silly in the extreme, are merely gratified, or rather occupied, with the strong emotions of horror excited by the momentary belief, for it can only last an instant. Such reading is a degrading waste of precious time, and has even a bad effect upon the feelings and the judgment.* But true stories of horrid crimes, as murders, and pitiable misfortunes, as shipwrecks, are not much more instructive. It may be better to read these than to sit yawning and idle—much better than to sit drinking or gaming, which, when carried to the least excess, are crimes in themselves, and the fruitful parents of many more. But this is nearly as much as can be said for such vain and unprofitable reading. If it be a pleasure to gratify curiosity, to know what we were ignorant of, to have our feelings of wonder called forth, how pure a delight of this very kind does natural science hold out to its students! Recollect some of the extraordinary discoveries of mechanical philosophy. How wonderful are the laws that regulate the motions of fluids! Is there anything in all the idle books of tales and horrors more truly astonishing than the fact, that a few pounds of water may, by mere pressure, without any machinery—by merely being placed in a particular way, produce an irresistible force? What can be more strange, than that an ounce weight should balance hundreds of pounds, by the intervention of a few bars of thin iron?

* *Children's Books* have at all times been made upon the pernicious plan of exciting wonder, generally horror, at whatever risk. The folly and misery occasioned by this error it would be difficult to estimate. The time may come when it will be felt and understood. At present the inveterate habits of parents and nurses prevent children from benefiting by the excellent lessons of Mrs. Barbauld and Miss Edgeworth.

Observe the extraordinary truths which optical science discloses. Can anything surprise us more, than to find that the colour of white is a mixture of all others—that red, and blue, and green, and all the rest, merely by being blended in certain proportions, form what we had fancied rather to be no colour at all, than all colours together? Chemistry is not behind in its wonders. That the diamond should be made of the same material with coal; that water should be chiefly composed of an inflammable substance; that acids should be, for the most part, formed of different kinds of air, and that one of those acids, whose strength can dissolve almost any of the metals, should consist of the self-same ingredients with the common air we breathe; that salts should be of a metallic nature, and composed, in a great part, of metals, fluid like quicksilver, but lighter than water, and which, without any heating, take fire upon being exposed to the air, and by burning form the substance so abounding in saltpetre and in the ashes of burnt wood;—these, surely, are things to excite the wonder of any reflecting mind, nay, of any one but little accustomed to reflect. And yet these are trifling when compared to the prodigies which astronomy opens to our view: the enormous masses of the heavenly bodies; their immense distances; their countless numbers, and their motions, whose swiftness mocks the uttermost efforts of the imagination.

Akin to this pleasure of contemplating new and extraordinary truths, is the gratification of a more learned curiosity, by tracing resemblances and relations between things which, to common apprehension, seem widely different. Mathematical science, to thinking minds, affords this pleasure in a high degree. It is agreeable to know that the three angles of every triangle, whatever be its size, howsoever its sides may be inclined to each other, are always of necessity, when taken together, the same in amount: that any regular kind of figure whatever, upon the one side of a right-angled triangle, is equal to the two figures of the same kind upon the two other sides, whatever be the size of the triangle: that the properties of an oval curve are extremely similar to those of a curve, which appears the least like it of any, consisting of two branches of infinite extent, with their backs turned to each other. To trace such unexpected

resemblances is, indeed, the object of all philosophy; and experimental science, in particular, is occupied with such investigations, giving us general views, and enabling us to explain the appearances of nature, that is, to show how one appearance is connected with another. But we are now considering only the gratification derived from learning these things.

It is surely a satisfaction, for instance, to know that the same thing, or motion, or whatever it is, which causes the sensation of heat, causes also fluidity, and expands bodies in all directions; that electricity, the light which is seen on the back of a cat when slightly rubbed on a frosty evening, is the very same matter with the lightning of the clouds;—that plants breathe like ourselves, but differently by day and by night;—that the air which burns in our lamps enables a balloon to mount, and causes the globules of the dust of plants to rise, float through the air, and continue their race;—in a word, is the immediate cause of vegetation. Nothing can at first view appear less like, or less likely to be caused by the same thing, than the processes of burning and of breathing, the rust of metals and burning, an acid and rust, the influence of a plant on the air it grows in by night, and of an animal on the same air at any time, nay, and of a body burning in that air; and yet all these are the same operation. It is an undeniable fact, that the very same thing which makes the fire burn, makes metals rust, forms acids, and enables plants and animals to breathe; but these operations, so unlike to common eyes, when examined by the light of science, are the same,—the rusting of metals, the formation of acids, the burning of inflammable bodies, the breathing of animals, and the growth of plants by night. To know this is a positive gratification. Is it not pleasing to find the same substance in various situations extremely unlike each other; to meet with fixed air as the produce of burning, of breathing, and of vegetation; to find that it is the choke-damp of mines, the bad air in the grotto at Naples, the cause of death in neglected brewers' vats, and of the brisk and acid flavour of Seltzer and other mineral springs? Nothing can be less like than the working of a vast steam-engine, of the old construction, and the crawling of a fly upon the window. Yet we find that these two operations

are performed by the same means, the weight of the atmosphere, and that a sea-horse climbs the ice-hills by no other power. Can anything be more strange to contemplate? Is there in all the fairy-tales that ever were fancied anything more calculated to arrest the attention, and to occupy and gratify the mind, than this most unexpected resemblance between things so unlike, to the eyes of ordinary beholders? What more pleasing occupation than to see uncovered and bared before our eyes the very instrument and the process by which Nature works? Then we raise our views to the structure of the heavens; and are again gratified with tracing accurate but most unexpected resemblances. Is it not in the highest degree interesting to find, that the power which keeps this earth in its shape, and in its path, wheeling upon its axis and round the sun, extends over all the other worlds that compose the universe, and gives to each its proper place and motion; that this same power keeps the moon in her path round our earth, and our earth in its path round the sun, and each planet in its path; that the same power causes the tides upon our globe, and the peculiar form of the globe itself; and that, after all, it is the same power which makes a stone fall to the ground? To learn these things, and to reflect upon them, occupies the faculties, fills the mind, and produces certain as well as pure gratification.

But if the knowledge of the doctrines unfolded by science is pleasing, so is the being able to trace the steps by which those doctrines are investigated, and their truth demonstrated: indeed, you cannot be said, in any sense of the word, to have learnt them, or to know them, if you have not so studied them as to perceive how they are proved. Without this, you never can expect to remember them long, or to understand them accurately; and that would of itself be reason enough for examining closely the grounds they rest on. But there is the highest gratification of all, in being able to see distinctly those grounds, so as to be satisfied that a belief in the doctrines is well founded. Hence to follow a demonstration of a grand mathematical truth—to perceive how clearly and how inevitably one step succeeds another, and how the whole steps lead to the conclusion—to observe how certainly and unerringly the reasoning

goes on from things perfectly self-evident, and by the smallest addition at each step, every one being as easily taken after the one before as the first step of all was, and yet the result being something not only far from self-evident, but so general and strange, that you can hardly believe it to be true, and are only convinced of it by going over the whole reasoning—this operation of the understanding, to those who so exercise themselves, always affords the highest delight. The contemplation of experimental inquiries, and the examination of reasoning founded upon the facts which our experiments and observations disclose, is another fruitful source of enjoyment, and no other means can be devised for either imprinting the results upon our memory, or enabling us really to enjoy the whole pleasures of science.

One of the most delightful treats which science affords us is the knowledge of the extraordinary powers with which the human mind is endowed. No man, until he has studied philosophy, can have a just idea of the great things for which Providence has fitted his understanding—the extraordinary disproportion which there is between his natural strength, and the powers of his mind and the force he derives from them. When we survey the marvellous truths of astronomy, we are first of all lost in the feeling of immense space, and of the comparative insignificance of this globe and its inhabitants. But there soon arises a sense of gratification and of new wonder at perceiving how so insignificant a creature has been able to reach such a knowledge of the unbounded system of the universe—to penetrate, as it were, through all space, and become familiar with the laws of Nature at distances so enormous as baffle our imagination—to be able to say, not merely that the sun has 329,630 times the quantity of matter which our globe has, Jupiter $308\frac{9}{10}$, and Saturn $93\frac{1}{2}$ times; but that a pound of lead weighs at the sun 22 lbs. 15 ozs. 16 dwts. 8 grs. and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a grain—at Jupiter 2 lbs. 1 oz. 19 dwts. 1 g. $\frac{20}{23}$—and at Saturn 1 lb. 3 ozs. 8 dwts. 20 grs. $\frac{1}{11}$ part of a grain! And what is far more wonderful, to discover the laws by which the whole of this vast system is held together and maintained through countless ages in perfect security and

order. It is surely no mean reward of our labour to become acquainted with the prodigious genius of those who have almost exalted the nature of man above its destined sphere, when, admitted to a fellowship with these loftier minds, we discover how it comes to pass that, by universal consent, they hold a station apart, rising over all the great teachers of mankind, and spoken of reverently, as if Newton and Laplace were not the names of mortal men.

The highest of all our gratifications in the contemplations of science remains: we are raised by them to an understanding of the infinite wisdom and goodness which the Creator has displayed in his works. Not a step can we take in any direction without perceiving the most extraordinary traces of design; and the skill everywhere conspicuous is calculated, in so vast a proportion of instances, to promote the happiness of living creatures, and especially of our own kind, that we can feel no hesitation in concluding that, if we knew the whole scheme of Providence, every part would be found in harmony with a plan of absolute benevolence. Independently, however, of this most consoling inference, the delight is inexpressible of being able to follow, as it were, with our eyes, the marvellous works of the Great Architect of Nature—to trace the unbounded power and exquisite skill which are exhibited in the most minute, as well as the mightiest parts of his system. The pleasure derived from this study is unceasing, and so various, that it never tires the appetite. But it is unlike the low gratifications of sense in another respect: while those hurt the health, debase the understanding, and corrupt the feelings, this elevates and refines our nature, teaching us to look upon all earthly objects as insignificant and below our notice, except the pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of virtue; and giving a dignity and importance to the enjoyment of life, which the frivolous and the grovelling cannot even comprehend.

Extracts from the Preliminary Discourse to the 'Political Philosophy,' published by the Useful Knowledge Society.

It is obvious that of all the sciences which form the subject of human study, none are calculated to afford greater

pleasure, and few so great to the student, as the important one of which we have just been describing the nature and the subdivisions. In common with the different branches of Natural Philosophy, it possesses all the interest derived from the contemplation of important truths, the first and the purest of the pleasures derived from any department of science. There is a positive pleasure in that exercise of the mental faculties which the investigation of mathematical and physical truth affords. The contemplation of mathematical and physical truths is, in itself, always pleasing and wholesome to the mind. There is a real pleasure in tracing the relations between figures and between substances, the resemblances unexpectedly found to exist among those which seem to differ, the precise differences found to exist between one figure and another, or one body and another. Thus, to find that the sum of the angles of all triangles, be their size or their form what it may, is uniformly the same, or that all circles, from the sun down to a watch dial, are to each other in one fixed proportion, as the squares of their diameters, is a matter of pleasing contemplation which we are glad to learn and to remember from the very constitution of our minds. So there is a great, even an exquisite pleasure in learning the composition of bodies: in knowing, for instance, that water, once believed to be a simple element, is composed of two substances, the more considerable of which makes, when united with heat in a certain form, the air we burn and the air we breathe; that rust is the combination of this last substance with metals; that flame is supported by it; that respiration is performed by means of it; that rusting, breathing, and burning, are all processes of the same kind; that two of the alkaline salts are themselves rusts of metals, one of these metals being lighter than water, burning spontaneously when exposed to the air, without any heat, and forming the salt by its combination. To know these things, and to contemplate such relations between bodies or operations seemingly so unlike, is in a high degree delightful, even if no practical use could be made of such knowledge. So the sublime truths of astronomy afford extreme gratification to the student. To find that the planets and the comets which wheel round the sun with a swiftness immensely greater than that of a cannon-ball, are

retained in their vast orbits by the same power which causes a stone to fall to the ground; that this power, with their various motions, moulds those bodies into the forms they have assumed; that their motions and the arrangement of their paths cause their mutual action to operate in such a manner, as to make their courses constantly vary, but also to prevent them from ever deviating beyond a certain point, and that the deviation being governed by fixed rules, never can exceed in any direction a certain amount, so as to preserve the perpetual duration of the system;—such truths as these transport the mind with amazement, and fill it with a pure and unwearying delight. This is the first and most legitimate pleasure of philosophy. As much and the like pleasure is afforded by contemplating the truths of Moral Science. To trace the connection of the mental faculties with each other; to mark how they are strengthened or enfeebled; to observe their variety or resemblance in different individuals; to ascertain their influence on the bodily functions, and the influence of the body upon them; to compare the human with the brute mind; to pursue the various forms of animal instinct; to examine the limits of instinct and reason in all tribes;—these are the sources of as pleasing contemplation as any which the truths of abstract or of physical science can bestow; from these contemplations we reap a gratification unalloyed with any pain, and removed far above all risk of the satiety and disgust to which the grosser indulgences of sense are subject. But the study of Political Science is equally fertile in the materials of pleasing contemplation. The examination of those principles which bind men together in communities, and enable them to exercise their whole mental powers in the most effectual and worthy manner; the knowledge of the means by which their happiness can be best secured and their virtues most promoted; the examination of the various forms in which the social system is found to exist; the tracing all the modifications which the general principles of ethics and of polity undergo in every variety of circumstances, both physical and moral; the discovery of resemblances in cases where nothing but contrasts might be expected; the observation of the effects produced by the diversities of political systems; the following of schemes of

polity from their most rude beginnings to their greatest perfection, and pursuing the gradual development of some master-principle through all the stages of its progress—these are studies which would interest a rational being, even if he could never draw from them any practical inference for the government of his own conduct, or the improvement of the society he belonged to—nay, even if he belonged to another species and was merely surveying the history and the state of human society as a curious observer, in like manner as we study the works of the bee, the beaver, and the ant. How prodigiously does the interest of such contemplations rise when it is the political habits of our own species that we are examining, and when, beside the sympathy naturally felt in the fortunes of our fellow creatures of other countries, at every step of our inquiry we enjoy the satisfaction of comparing their institutions with our own, of marking how far they depart from the same model, and of tracing the consequences of the variety upon the happiness of millions of beings like ourselves! How analogous is this gratification to the kindred pleasure derived from Comparative Anatomy, which enables us to mark the resemblances and the differences in structure and in functions between the frame of other animals and our own!

From the contemplation of political truths our minds rise naturally, and by a process also of legitimate reasoning like that which discovers those truths, towards the great Creator of the universe, the source of all that we have been surveying by the light of science,—the Almighty Being who made the heavens and the earth, and sustains the frame of the world by the word of His power. But he also created the mind of man,—bestowed upon him a thinking, a reasoning, and a feeling nature,—placed him in a universe of wonders,—endowed him with faculties to comprehend them, and to rise by his meditation to a knowledge of their Great First Cause. The Moral world, then, affords additional evidence of the creating and preserving power, and its contemplations also raise the mind to a communion with its Maker. Shall any doubt be entertained that the like pleasing and useful consequences result from a study of Man in his political capacity, and a contemplation of the structure and functions of the Political world? The nice adaptation of

our species for the social state; the increase of our powers, as well as the multiplication of our comforts and our enjoyments, by union of purpose and action; the subserviency of the laws governing the nature and motions of the material world to the uses of man in his social position; the tendency of his mental faculties and moral feelings to further the progress of social improvement; the predisposition of political combinations, even in unfavourable circumstances, to produce good, and the inherent powers by which evil is avoided, compensated, or repaired; the singular laws, partly physical and partly moral, by which the numbers of mankind are maintained, and the balance of the sexes preserved with unerring certainty;—these form only a portion of the marvels to which the eyes of the political observer are pointed, and by which his attention is arrested; for there is hardly any one political arrangement which by its structure and functions does not shed a light on the capacities of human nature, and illustrate the power and the wonders of the Providence to which man looks as his Maker and Preserver. Such contemplations, connected with all the branches of science, and only neglected by the superficial or the perverted, are at once the reward of philosophic labour, the source of true devotion, the guide of wise and virtuous conduct. They are the true end of all our knowledge, and they give to each portion of it a double value and a higher relish.

The last—but in the view of many, probably most men, the most important—advantage derived from the sciences, is their practical adaptation to the uses of life. It is not correct—it is the very reverse of the truth—to represent this as the only real, and, as it were, tangible profit derived from scientific discoveries or philosophical pursuits in general. There cannot be a greater oversight or greater confusion of ideas than that in which such a notion has its origin. It is nearly akin to the fallacy which represents profitable or productive labour as that kind of labour alone by which some substantial or material thing is produced or fashioned. The labour which of all others most benefits a community, the superior order of labour which governs, defends, and improves a state, is by this fallacy excluded from the title of productive, merely because, instead of be-

stowing additional value on one mass or parcel of a nation's capital, it gives additional value to the whole of its property, and gives it that quality of security without which all other value would be worthless. So they who deny the importance of mere scientific contemplation, and exclude from the uses of science the pure and real pleasure of discovering, and of learning, and of surveying its truths, forget how many of the enjoyments derived from what are called the practical applications of the sciences, resolve themselves into gratifications of a merely contemplative kind. Thus, the steam engine is confessed to be the most useful application of machinery and of chemistry to the arts. Would it not be so if steam navigation were its only result, and if no one used a steam boat but for excursions of curiosity or of amusement? Would it not be so if steam engines had never been used but in the fine arts? So a microscope is a useful practical application of optical science as well as a telescope—and a telescope would be so, although it were only used in examining distant views for our amusement, or in showing us the real figures of the planets, and were of no use in navigation or in war. The mere pleasure, then, of tracing relations, and of contemplating general laws in the material, the moral, and the political world, is the direct and legitimate value of science; and all scientific truths are important for this reason, whether they ever lend any aid to the common arts of life or no. In like manner the mental gratification afforded by the scientific contemplations of Natural Religion are of great value, independent of their much higher virtue in mending the heart and improving the life, towards which important object, indeed, all the contemplations of science more or less directly tend, and in this higher sense all the pleasures of science are justly considered as Practical Uses.

JOHNSON.

THE materials for writing the Life of Dr. Johnson are certainly more abundant than for the biography of any other distinguished person: not even excepting him whose Confessions reveal all that he himself could recollect, and chose to record of his own history; or him whose incessant activity and multiplicity of connections, left fourscore volumes of his published works, and twenty of his private correspondence. We owe the great riches of the English Author's remains to the curiosity excited by his lively and pointed conversation, and the happy accident of his living for the latter part of his life in the society of a person eminently qualified, both by his tastes and his habits, to afford that curiosity an almost unlimited gratification. In the grateful remembrance of all who relish the pleasures of refined social intercourse, with the name of Johnson is associated that of Boswell, as indissolubly as are those of Plato and Xenophon with the more remarkable name of Socrates in the minds of all who love philosophy; and there is perhaps added a zest to the collections of the English writer which the Athenian records possess not; we see the amiable and lively historian figuring always in the group with his more stern idol, affording relief, by contrast, to the picture of the sage, and amusing by his own harmless foibles, which he takes a pleasure in revealing, as if he shared the gratification he was preparing for his unknown reader. His cleverness, his tact, his skill in drawing forth those he was studying, his admirable good humour, his strict love of truth, his high and generous principle, his kindness

towards his friends, his unvarying but generally rational piety, have scarcely been sufficiently praised by those who nevertheless have been always ready, as needs they must be, to acknowledge the debt of gratitude due for perhaps the book, of all that were ever written, the most difficult to lay down once it has been taken up. To the great work of Mr. Boswell, may be added some portions of Sir John Hawkins's far inferior, and much less accurate biography; the amusing but also somewhat careless anecdotes of Mrs. Piozzi, formerly Mrs. Thrale, and above all, the two interesting works of Madame D'Arblay, the celebrated Miss Burney, her own autobiography, and the life of her father. These works, but the two last especially, abound in important additions to that of Mr. Boswell; and what relates to Dr. Johnson certainly forms the principal value of them both.*

In estimating the merits of Johnson, prejudices of a very powerful nature have too generally operated unfavourably to the cause of truth. The strongly marked features of his mind were discernible in the vehemence of his opinions both on political and religious subjects; he was a high tory, and a high churchman in all controversies respecting the state; he was under the habitual influence of his religious impressions, and leant decidedly in favour of the system established and protected by law. He treated those whose opinions had

* We must, however, not pass over the light, somewhat lurid it must be owned, which the autobiography sheds on the habits and effects of a court life; the dreadful prostration of the understanding which may be seen to arise among at least the subordinate figures of the courtly group. I own that I cannot conceive this to be the universally resembling picture. My own experience and observation of many years, some of them passed in near connexion with our court, leads me to this conclusion. It must be added in extenuation of the absurdities so often laughed at in Boswell, that this amiable author furnishes quite her fair proportion of the matter of ridicule. Such weakness as marks many of her sentiments, such deeply seated vanity as pervades the whole, not only of her own, but of her father's memoirs, which are in truth an autobiography as much as a life of him, cannot certainly be surpassed, if they can be matched, in the less deliberate effusions of Mr. Boswell's avowed self-esteem.

an opposite inclination, with little tolerance and no courtesy; and hence while these undervalued his talents and his acquirements, those with whom he so cordially agreed were apt to overrate both. To this must be added, two accidental circumstances, from which were derived exaggerated opinions, both of his merits and his defects; the extravagant admiration of the little circle in which he lived producing a reaction among all beyond it; and the vehement national prejudices under which he laboured, if indeed he did not cherish and indulge them, prejudices that made his own countrymen prone to exalt, and strangers as prone to decry both his understanding and his knowledge. On one point, however, there is never likely to be any difference of opinion. While the exercise of his judgment will by all be allowed to have been disturbed by his prejudices, the strength of his faculties will be admitted by all; and no one is likely to deny that he may justly be ranked among the most remarkable men of his age, even if we regard the works which he has left, but much more if we consider the resources of his conversation. This must be the result of a calm and candid review of his history, after all due allowance shall be made for the undoubted effects of manner and singularity in exalting the impression of both his writings and his talk.

Samuel Johnson was born 18th of September, 1709, at Lichfield, where his father, originally from Derbyshire, was a bookseller and stationer in a small way of business. His mother was of a yeoman's family named Ford, for many generations settled in Warwickshire. He inherited from his father a large and robust bodily frame, with a disposition towards melancholy and hypochondriacism, which proved the source of wretchedness to him through life. From his nurse he is supposed (though probably it was hereditary too,) to have caught a scrofulous disorder, of whose ravages he always bore the scars, which deprived him of the sight

of one eye, and which, under the influence of the vulgar supposition so long prevalent, made his parents bring him to London that he might be touched by Queen Anne. His father was a man of respectable character and good abilities; and while he devoted himself to his trade, frequenting various parts of the country to sell his books, he seems to have had much pleasure in the diffusion of knowledge, and to have been himself knowing in several branches of ordinary learning. His mother was uneducated, but had a strong natural understanding, and a deep sense of religion, which she early instilled into her son. There was only one other child, a younger brother, who followed the father's business, and died at the age of five-and-twenty. The family were of strong high church principles, and continued through all fortunes attached to the House of Stuart.

Johnson at a very early age showed abilities far above those of his comrades. His quickness of apprehension made learning exceedingly easy to him, and he had an extraordinary power of memory, which stood by him through life. His school companions well remembered in after life his great superiority over them all; they would relate how when only six or seven years old, he used to help them in their tasks as well as to amuse them by his jokes and his narratives, and how they were wont to carry him of a morning to school, attending him in a kind of triumph. The seminary in which he was educated for several years after, was Mr. Hunter's, and although he always considered the severity of that teacher as excessive, he yet candidly admitted that but for the strict discipline maintained, he should never have learnt much; for his nature was extremely indolent owing to his feeble spirits and broken health, and his habits of application were then, as ever after, very desultory and irregular. The school was, moreover, famous for a succession of ushers and schoolmasters hardly equalled in any other;

six or seven who attained eminence in after life, all about the time of Johnson, having either taught or learnt under Mr. Hunter.

In his fifteenth year he went to Mr. Westworth's school at Stourbridge by the advice of his maternal cousin, Mr. Ford, a clergyman represented as of better capacity than life; and after a year passed there to no good purpose, he returned to Lichfield, where he whiled away his time for two years and upwards, reading, in a desultory manner, whatever books came in his way; a habit which clung to him through life, insomuch that fond as he was of poetry, he confessed that he never had read any one poem to an end. The result, however, of the time thus spent, and of his very retentive memory, was his acquiring a variety of knowledge exceedingly rare in very young men, and becoming acquainted with many writers whose works are little read by any one.

In 1728, being in his nineteenth year, he was sent to Oxford, and entered of Pembroke College. His father's circumstances were so narrow that this step never could have been taken without the prospect of some assistance from his friends; and as few men who raise themselves from humble beginnings are found very anxious to claim the praise which all are so ready to bestow, so we find among the biographers of Johnson, a reluctance of the same kind, with respect to their hero, and a disposition to involve in obscurity the contribution which must have been made to his college education. Mr. Corbet, a gentleman of Shropshire, is supposed by Sir John Hawkins to have supported him for the first year as his son's teacher; though this is denied by Mr. Boswell, who yet admits his father's inability to maintain him at Oxford. Some gentlemen of the cathedral at Lichfield afterwards contributed to his support. But that he suffered much from poverty during the time of his residence is certain; and his inability to attend some course of instruction which he

greatly wished to follow, from the want of fit shoes, is a fact related by those who remarked his feet appearing through those he wore, and who also have recorded his proud refusal of assistance while in such distress. The pecuniary difficulties of his father increasing, or the aid of his friends being withdrawn, he could not longer remain at college, even in that poor condition; and after three years' residence he was under the necessity of retiring to Lichfield without taking a degree. But his veneration for the University, and above all, his love for Pembroke, remained by him ever after. When noting the number of poets who had belonged to it, he would cry out with exultation, "Sir, we are a nest of singing birds;" and to the latest period of his life, his choicest relaxation was to repair from London and pass a few days at the Master's Lodge.

During his residence, he passed the periods of vacation at Lichfield; and there is something peculiarly distressing in the account handed down, and indeed proceeding chiefly from himself, of the wretchedness which he suffered about this early age, in consequence of his morbid state of mind. The first of the violent attacks of hypochondria which he experienced was in 1729, in his twentieth year; and it seized upon him with such irritation and fretfulness, with such dejection and gloom, that he described his existence as a misery. The judgment appears never to have been clouded, nor the imagination to have acquired greater power over the reason, than to impress him with fearful apprehensions of insanity; for he never was under anything resembling delusion; and although a torpor of the faculties would often supervene, insomuch that there were days when he said he could not exert himself so as to tell the hour upon the town clock, yet even while suffering severely he had the power of drawing up a most clear, acute, and elegant account of his disease in Latin for the opinion of his godfather, Dr. Swinfen, who was so much struck with it, that he,

perhaps indiscreetly, showed it to others; an act never forgiven by the author. He had recourse to various expedients to drive away this frightful malady, but in vain. Sometimes he would take violent bodily exercise, walking to Birmingham and back again; sometimes, but this was rather at a late period, he had recourse to drinking; and though he never admitted that this resource failed entirely, yet it may be presumed it did, both because such a practice is always found in other cases to exacerbate the mischief, and because he for many years of his life entirely gave up the use of fermented liquors. He attained by experience some little control over the disease, probably by steering a judicious course between idleness and overwork, by being moderate in the enjoyment of sleep, and by attention to diet. But he never at any period of his long life was free from the infliction, so that melancholy was the general habit, and its remission was only by intervals comparatively short. What haunted him was the dread of insanity; and he was ever accustomed to regard his malady as a partial visitation of that dreadful calamity. He never believed himself deranged, but he never hesitated both in writing and speaking to call his mental disease by the name of madness without any circumlocution, though he only meant to express that it was a morbid affection.

The accounts which we have, and also upon his own authority, of his early religious history, are interesting. Although his mother's precepts and example gave him as strong a bias towards religion as most children can have, yet he considered her to have somewhat overdone her work, especially by requiring the Sabbath to be spent in "heaviness," in confinement, and in reading the 'Whole Duty of Man,' which neither interested nor attracted him. From nine to fourteen years of age he was wholly indifferent to sacred subjects, and had a great reluctance to attend the service

of the Church. From that time till he went to Oxford, five years later, he was a general "talker against religion," as he described himself, "for he did not much think against it." At Oxford he took up Law's 'Serious Call to a Holy Life,' expecting to find a subject of ridicule; but he "found Law quite an overmatch for him," and from that time his belief was uninterrupted, and even strong. The nature of his melancholy, and the hardships of his life, worked with his convictions to make him place his reliance upon a future state of happiness, and few men have perhaps ever lived in whose thoughts religion had a larger or more practical share.

While at Oxford, his reading continued to be desultory, though extensive, and his College tutor being a person of amiable character, but moderate endowments, he was left much to himself in the conduct of his studies. The only application which he appears to have given was to Greek, and his attention even here was confined to Homer and Euripides. Before he came to College he had exercised himself much in writing verses, and especially in translating from the Latin; the specimens which remain show sufficiently his command of both languages, and their closeness is worthy of praise. His translation of Pope's 'Messiah' into Latin verse has been much commended, and by Pope himself among others; but Johnson never regarded it as possessing any value. Pope's observation was indeed highly laudatory. "The writer of this Poem," said he, "will leave it doubtful in after-times which was the original, his verses or mine."

On his return to Lichfield he found his father's affairs in a state of hopeless insolvency; and before the end of the year (1731) he died. A few months more were spent in the place; and he frequented now, as he had done before, a circle of excellent provincial society, of which accomplished and well-bred

women of family formed an important part. The accounts of his conversation at this time all agree in representing it as intelligent, but modest; his manner awkward enough as far as regarded external qualities, but civilized; and his whole demeanour free from that roughness and even moroseness which it afterwards acquired, partly from living much alone during his struggles for subsistence, partly from the effects of his mental and nervous malady; in no little degree, also, from the habit of living in a small circle of meek and submissive worshippers.

In the summer of 1732 he accepted an appointment as usher to a school at Market Bosworth; but to the labour of teaching he never could inure himself; and it was rendered more intolerable by the duty which devolved upon him of acting as a kind of lay-chaplain to Sir Walter Dixie, the patron of the school, a situation in which he was treated with haughtiness and even harshness. To the few months which he thus passed he ever after looked back, not merely with aversion, but with a kind of horror.

He now removed to Birmingham, where he was employed by Warren, a bookseller, and the first who settled in that great town. He carried on a newspaper in which Johnson wrote, who also translated from the French Father Lobo's 'Voyage to Abyssinia.' This work has been carefully examined, to discover if any traces can be perceived of his peculiar style; but nothing of the kind appears. The preface, however, is as completely clothed in his diction as any of his subsequent productions; and shows that he had then, in his twenty-fifth year, formed the habit of sturdily thinking for himself and rejecting all marvellous stories, at least in secular matters, which ever after distinguished him, as well as of tersely and epigrammatically expressing his thoughts. Mr. Boswell and Mr. Burke examined this piece together, and the following portion of the passage on which they pitched

as a proof of his early maturity in that manner, may serve to gratify the reader, and to prove the truth of the foregoing remark.

"This Traveller has consulted his senses and not his imagination. He meets with no basilisks that destroy with their eyes; his crocodiles devour their prey without tears; and his cataracts fall from the rocks without deafening the neighbouring inhabitants. The reader will here find no regions cursed with irremediable barrenness or blessed with spontaneous fecundity; no perpetual gloom or unceasing sunshine; nor are the natives here described either devoid of all sense of humanity, or consummate in all private or social virtues. Here are no Hottentots without religious piety or articulable language, no Chinese perfectly polite and completely skilled in all sciences; he will discover what will always be discovered by a diligent and impartial enquirer, that where human nature is to be found, there is a mixture of vice and virtue, a contest of passion and reason; and that the Creator doth not appear partial in his distributions, but has balanced in most countries their particular inconveniences by particular favours."

For the next three years he lived between Birmingham and Lichfield, and having formed the acquaintance of Mr. Porter, a mercer in the latter town, he became, after his decease, attached to his widow, whom he married in the summer of 1736. She is described as of vulgar and affected manners, and of a person not merely without attraction but repulsive, plain in her features, which though naturally florid, she loaded with red paint as well as refreshed with cordials, large in her stature, and disposed to corpulence. To this picture drawn by Garrick, one of her friends has added, that she was a person of good understanding and great sentimentality, with a disposition towards sarcasm; and it is certain that the empire over her husband, which occasioned their marriage, subsisted

to her decease, sixteen years after, and so far survived her that he continued for the rest of his life to offer up prayers for her soul, beside ever keeping the day of her death as a fast with pious veneration.

As she brought him but a few hundred pounds of fortune, her husband having died insolvent, it was necessary that the imprudence of the match should be compensated by some exertion to obtain a living. They therefore opened an Academy at Edial, near Lichfield; but only three pupils presented themselves, of whom Garrick and his brother were two; and after a few months of vainly waiting for more, Johnson and Garrick set forward to try their fortune in London, whither Mrs. Johnson followed him some months later.

It was in the Spring of 1737 that he came to reside in London; and he now entered upon a life of as complete dependence on literary labour as is to be found in the history of letters. No man ever was more an author by profession than he appears to have been for a quarter of a century; and he suffered during that period all the evils incident to that precarious employment. Of these the principal certainly is, that there being no steady demand for the productions of the pen, the author is perpetually obliged to find out subjects on which he may be employed, and to entice employers: thus, unlike most other labourers, stimulating the demand as well as furnishing the supply. Hence we find Johnson constantly suggesting works on which he is willing to be employed, and often failing to obtain the concurrence of his publisher. For some years, before he had left Lichfield, he had made unsuccessful attempts of this kind. A proposal to publish Politian's Latin Poems was printed by him in 1734, in conjunction with his brother, who had succeeded to his father's shop. Notes on the history of Modern Latin Poetry and a life of Politian were to be subjoined; but, as might be easily foreseen, this

project met with no kind of encouragement. Indeed it would hardly succeed in our own times as a speculation for profit to the author. The success of the 'Gentleman's Magazine' next seems to have struck him as affording the hope of a connexion with Mr. Cave, its conductor; and to him he addressed a letter under a feigned name, proposing to write articles the subjects of which he thought he could suggest so as to benefit the work, hinting also at other literary schemes which he was prepared to unfold "if he could be secure from having others reap the advantage of what he should suggest." But it does not appear, though Cave answered the letter, that his reply was so favourable as to produce any result. Upon settling in London, however, he propitiated that respectable publisher with some very middling sapphics in his praise, which were inserted in the Magazine, and he was from thenceforth employed pretty regularly in writing criticisms, biographies, and other papers, so that for many years this miscellany formed the principal source of his slender income. He, however, eked it out with other occasional writings. A new translation (at his suggestion) was undertaken by Dodsley and Cave of Father Paul's celebrated 'History,' with Le Courayer's Notes, which had been recently added to the French edition. It appears that Johnson was paid in small sums, about fifty pounds, on account of this work, which was given up in consequence of another being announced, and by a singular coincidence, also the production of a Samuel Johnson, who was patronized by the Clergy. He, moreover, wrote prefaces to different books, and, soon after he settled in London, he published the admirable translation of Juvenal's Third Satire, entitled 'London,' which at once gave him a high place among the poets of the day. It was followed some years later by the 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' an Imitation of the Tenth. It is known that Pope at once expressed his hearty admiration of the

'London' in no measured terms, feeling none of the petty jealousy which might have been occasioned by the fickle multitude's exclamation, "Here is arisen an obscure poet greater than Pope;" his remark was, "Depend upon it, he will soon be drawn out from his retreat."

Nothing can be more painful than to contemplate the struggles in which these years of his penury were passed, more especially the earlier ones, after he came to London. He dined at a boarding-house or ordinary for eight pence, including a penny which he allowed the servant. The tone of his correspondence with Cave ever and anon lets his wants appear. One letter subscribed with his name, has the significant, it is to be feared the literary word, *impransus*, prefixed to the signature. Another in 1742, while the Fra Paolo was going on, mentions his having "received money on this work, £13 2s. 6d., reckoning the half guinea of last Saturday." In the postscript he adds, "If you can spare me another guinea I should take it very kindly, but if not I shall not think it an injury." All the little valuables, including a small silver cup and spoon given him by his mother, when he was brought up to be touched for the evil, were offered for sale, to buy necessaries in the pressing wants of himself and his wife, and the spoon only was kept. Nay, an affecting anecdote is furnished by Mr. Harte, author of Gustavus Adolphus's Life, that having dined with Cave and commended one of Johnson's writings, Cave afterwards told him how happy it had made the author to hear him thus express himself. "How can that be," said Harte, "when there were only our two selves present?" "Yes," said Cave, "but you might observe a plate with victuals sent from the table. Johnson was behind the screen, where he ate it, being too meanly dressed to appear." It is truly afflicting to think that the work thus praised was his beautiful poem of 'London.' The penury too in which he

existed seems to have long survived the obscurity of his earlier life in London. As late as 1759, after he had been two-and-twenty years in the world of letters, and had in several of its provinces attained great eminence as an author, while his mother was on her death-bed he had to borrow of his printer six of the twelve guineas he sent to supply her pressing wants; and in the evenings of the week after her decease, he wrote his 'Rasselas,' in order to defray the expenses of her funeral and discharge a few debts which she had left. He received a hundred pounds for it.

Nor must it be forgotten that to these miseries, the general lot of the literary man's life, was added in Johnson's the far worse suffering from his constitutional complaint, a suffering bad enough in itself if the companion of ease and of affluence, but altogether intolerable when it weighs down the spirits and the faculties of him whose mental labour must contribute to the supply of his bodily wants. The exertion, no doubt, when once made, is the best medicine for the disease; but it is the peculiar operation of the disease to render all such exertion painful in the extreme, to make the mind recoil from it, and render the intellectual powers both torpid and sluggish, when a painful effort has put them in motion.—I speak with some confidence on a subject which accident has enabled me to study in the case of one with whom I was well acquainted for many years; and who either outlived the malady, which in him was hereditary, or obtained a power over it by constant watchfulness, diligent care, and a fixed resolution to conquer it. As in Johnson's case, it was remittent, but also periodical, a thing not mentioned of Johnson's; for in my friend's case it recurred at intervals, first of six months, then of a year, afterwards of two and three years, until it ceased; and the duration of the attack was never more than of eight or ten months. It seemed wholly unconnected

with bodily complaint, though it appeared to interfere with the functions of the alimentary canal; and it was relieved by strict attention to diet, and by great temperance in all particulars. There was, as in Johnson's case, no kind of delusion, nor any undue action of the imagination; but unlike his, it was wholly unattended with apprehensions or fears of any kind. There was also no disposition to indulgence of any sort except of sleep; and a particular aversion to the excitement of fermented liquors, the use of which indeed never failed to exacerbate the malady, as Johnson, too, from his confession to Mr. Boswell, appears to have found, after trying them in vain to alleviate his suffering. The senses were not at all more dull than usual, and there was as much relish both of physical and mental enjoyment. But the seat of the disease being in the mind, and in the mind wholly, independent of and unaffected by any external circumstances, good fortune produced no exhilaration, afflictions no additional depression. The attack commenced sometimes suddenly, that is, in a few days, and not seldom was foretold by dreaming that it had begun. The course was this: The active powers were first affected; all the exertions of the will becoming more painful and more difficult. This inertness next extended itself and crept over the intellectual faculties, the exercise of which became more distasteful and their operations more sluggish; but the results, though demanding more time, were in no respect of inferior quality. Indeed, the patient used sometimes to say that when time was of no importance, the work was better, though much more painfully done. The exertions resolutely made and steadily persevered in, seemed gradually to undermine the disease, and each effort rendered the succeeding one less difficult. But before he became so well acquainted with the cure, and made little or no exertion, passing the time in reading only, the recovery took place nearly in the same manner as afterwards under

a more severe regimen, only that he has told me that to this regimen he ascribed his ultimate cure after obtaining a constantly increasing prolongation of the healthy intervals. The recovery of the mind's tone always took place in the reverse order to the loss of it; first the power returned before the will; or the faculties were restored to their vigour, before the desire of exerting them had come back. It is much to be lamented that no one examined Dr. Johnson more minutely respecting his complaint; for he never showed any disposition to conceal the particulars of it. The sad experience which he had of its effects appears frequently to have been in his thoughts when writing; and it can, I conceive, be more particularly traced in his account of Collins,* whose disease became so greatly aggravated that he was placed under restraint. The malady in Johnson appears never to have reached to so great a height as in the case of Collins; and indeed of Sir Isaac Newton, who was also subject to it, and whose faculties at one period of his illustrious life it entirely clouded over.† Chance having thrown in my way the case above described, I have thought it right to record it for the benefit of those who may be similarly afflicted; and if any one suffering under it is desirous of further information, I believe I shall be able to procure it. Dr. Baillie was at one time consulted, but declared that the mental and bodily regi-

* See 'Lives of the Poets,' vol. iv.

† Some controversy has arisen on this subject, occasioned by M. Biot's statement, (in his Biography of Newton,) taken from Huyghens, who had it from Collins. There is also a partial confirmation in Abraham de la Pryne's 'Diary,' and in Babington's 'Letters.' But I found among Locke's papers twenty years ago, a letter which seems to leave no doubt on the subject. Newton had written a letter to Locke, accusing himself (Newton) of having thought and spoke ill of him, and asking his pardon. Locke immediately answered it in a letter which has been much and justly admired. Newton replies, that he cannot conceive to what Locke alludes, as he has no recollection of having written to him; but he adds that for some time past he had been out of health owing to a bad habit of sleeping after dinner. This letter was found on looking through Locke's papers, when Lord Denman and I visited Lord King at Ockham, Christmas, 1826.

men which had been adopted, were the best that occurred to him; only he strongly recommended horse exercise, and an abstinence from hard work of all kinds, neither of which prescriptions, as I have since understood, were followed. He had once known a case much resembling this, and which also terminated favourably, by the disease, as it were, wearing itself out.

While Johnson was carrying on manfully and independently and even proudly this arduous struggle, induced by the natural desire of obtaining some less precarious employment which might suffice for his support, he listened to an offer of the mastership of Appleby Grammar School, in Staffordshire. The salary was only sixty pounds a year, but he would gladly have accepted this with the labour of teaching, however hateful to him, that he might escape from the drudgery and the uncertainties of a poor author's life. Unfortunately the rules of the foundation required that the master should have the degree of M.A., and after a fruitless attempt through Lord Gower to obtain this from the University of Dublin, he was forced to abandon the scheme. This took place in 1739; and when the attempt failed, he made another effort equally unsuccessful to practise as an advocate in Doctors' Commons, the want of a still higher degree proving there an insuperable obstacle.

Among his contributions to the 'Gentleman's Magazine' are the accounts which he drew up of the debates in Parliament. They were given as proceedings in the "Senate of Lilliput;" the squeamishness of parliamentary privilege men, even in those days, not permitting them to suffer an open violation of the Standing Orders, which their courage would not let them enforce. During the three years 1740, 1741, and 1742, he carried on this alone, obtaining only such help or hints as he could pick up from frequenting a coffee-house in the neighbourhood of the two Houses, and from original communications made by the

speakers themselves. The style of the whole is plainly Johnson's own, and so was by far the greater part of the matter. The supposed speech of Lord Chatham, in answer to Horatio Walpole's attack on his youth, is entirely Johnson's, as every reader must perceive, and as he never affected to deny. Yet the public were, for a while, deceived; and as soon as he discovered that these compositions passed for genuine, he at once gave them up, being resolved that he should be no party to a deception. Mr. Boswell says (I. 128), that a short time before his death, he "expressed his regret at having been the author of fictions which had passed for realities." It is singular enough that any person pretending to write on such subjects should have had the simplicity to praise Johnson for the success with which he had "exhibited the manner of each particular speaker"—there being no manner exhibited in any of the speeches, except one, and that the peculiar manner of Dr. Johnson.

During the first five years of his residence in London he appears to have associated more with Savage than with any other person; and this connection, the result of that unfortunate, but dissipated, and indeed reckless individual's agreeable qualities, was the only part of his life upon which Johnson had any occasion to look back with shame; though, so permanent was the fascination under which he was laid by the talents and the knowledge of high life which he found, or fancied he found, in his companion, that he never would own his delusion—never, perhaps, sufficiently felt the regret he ought to have experienced for the aberration. The idle, listless habits of the man accorded well with his own; their distresses were nearly equal, though the one seemed degraded from the station he was born to, while the other was only unfortunate in not having yet reached that which he was by his merits entitled to. Irregular habits, impatience of steady industry, unequal animal spirits, a subsistence

altogether depending on their own casual exertions—and altogether precarious, had these exertions been far more sustained—were common to them both. The love of drinking was much more Savage's vice than Johnson's, though, under the influence of his own malady and his friend's example, he soon fell into it, without, however, indulging in so great excesses. But the laxity of the poet's principles, and his profligate habits, made an inroad on the moralist's purity of conduct, for which his temperament certainly paved the way; the testimony of his provincial friends to the chastity of his private life, has not been echoed by those who knew him in London; and Mr. Boswell has delicately, but pointedly described those "indulgences as having occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind" (I. 143). When we are told that he would often roam the streets with Savage after a debauch, which had exhausted their means of finding a bed for the night, and which, when the weather proved inclement, drove them to warm themselves by the smouldering ashes of a glass-house—when we reflect that this companion had not been reclaimed from such courses by killing a man in a brawl arising immediately out of a night thus spent—when we consider that one so poor must have sought the indulgences so plainly indicated by his biographer, his all but adoring biographer, in their more crapulous form—and when to all this is added the recollection (foreign to Savage's history) that Johnson was a married man, with whom affection only had made a virtuous woman share the poorest of lots—surely we may be permitted to marvel at the intolerance with which the defects of others were, during the rest of his days, ever beheld by him, as if he was making a compensation for his own conduct by want of charity to his neighbours. But, above all, have we a right to complain that the associate of Savage, the companion of his debauches, should have presumed to insult men of such pure

minds as David Hume and Adam Smith — rudely refusing to bear them company but for an instant, merely because he regarded the sceptical opinions of the one with horror, and could not forgive the other for being his friend.

Savage died in prison at Bristol, miserably as he had lived, July, 1743, in his forty-sixth year. He had been arrested for a debt of eight pounds. Many who knew him were willing to subscribe for his relief; his wayward temper induced him to choose this moment for writing a satire on the place where his friends resided; and he expired, after six months' confinement, not without the suspicion that a letter from Pope, taxing him, as he said, unjustly, with great ingratitude, had brought on the fever of which he died. Johnson was not a man whose friendship for any person, however misplaced, or admiration of his talents, however exaggerated beyond the truth, would cease when he was laid low; and he immediately set about exhibiting both in that 'Life,' which has been the object of so much admiration, and which certainly has all the merits, with most of the defects that belong to his style, both of thinking and of writing. The plain language in which he accused Savage's mother, Lady Macclesfield, after her divorce married to Colonel Brett, of unnatural cruelty to her son, of scandalous licentiousness, nay, of attempts to cause the death of the child whose only fault towards her was his being the living evidence of an adultery which she herself avowed, in order to annul her first marriage, can hardly be supposed to have been suffered, at a time when all libels were so severely dealt with by the parties attacked and by the Courts; but the reason probably was, that one of the charges was notoriously admitted by the person accused, and the blacker imputation could not have been denied without reviving the memory of the scandal in which the whole had its origin.*

* One passage in the 'Life' seems to dare and defy her. After charging

At the time of his associating with Savage the circle of Johnson's acquaintance was very limited, and those whom he knew were in humble circumstances. One exception is afforded in Mr. Hervey, son of Lord Bristol, of whom he always spoke with admiration and esteem, although he admitted the profligacy of his friend's life. Mr. Hervey left the army and went into the church; nor can it be doubted that his pleasing manners, the talents, which like all his race he possessed, and his familiarity with the habits of high life, formed an attraction which Johnson could not at any time resist. "Call a dog, Hervey," he would say, "and I shall love him."* The friendship which, soon after his removal to London, he formed with Reynolds, can scarcely be reckoned a second exception; for at that time Sir Joshua's circumstances were so little above his own, that an anecdote is preserved of some ladies, at whose house the author and the artist happened to meet, feeling much disconcerted by the arrival of a Duchess while "they were in such company." Johnson perceiving their embarrassment and offended with it, took his revenge by affecting to be a common mechanic, and asking Reynolds "how much he thought they could earn in a week if they wrought to their utmost."

The ordinary literary labour of his life in magazines, reviews, prefaces, and smaller essays, for the book-

her with "endeavouring to destroy her son by a lie, in a manner unaccountable, except that the most execrable crimes are sometimes committed without apparent temptation," he adds, "This mother is still alive, and may perhaps even yet, though her malice was so often defeated, enjoy the pleasure of reflecting that the life which she so often endeavoured to take away was at least shortened by her unnatural offences." She must have been near seventy at this time, and the chief scandal of her life had been fifty years before.

* The persons described by his black servant as most about him some years later, and when he had extended his acquaintance, were Williams, an apothecary, with whom he used to dine every Sunday, Mrs. Masters, a poetess, that lived in Cave's house, some booksellers and printers, and copyists, one or two authoresses, and Mrs. Gardner, the wife of a tallow chandler.

sellers, in correcting the works of authors, and even superintending the press for publishers, appears to have been, during these five-and-twenty years, carried on almost like a trade, and without any scruples as to receiving the most humble remuneration. Thus, on one occasion, he received from Dodsley a guinea for writing a prospectus to a new weekly paper; and on another he praised the generosity of some Irish dignitary, who gave him ten guineas for correcting a bad poem, in which he blotted out many lines, and might, he said, have blotted many more. Beside the more regular employment of the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' he wrote a number of articles for the 'Literary Magazine,' in 1756; among others his review of Soame Jenyns on the 'Origin of Evil,' reckoned, and justly, one of his happiest performances, perhaps his best prose work, and which stands high in the first class of severe, but not unjust criticisms. But his humbler labours during this period were relieved by works of a much higher order, one of which, the 'London,' has been mentioned. In 1749 he produced his imitation of the Tenth Satire, under the title of the 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' and greatly extended his poetical reputation by that admirable piece. The price paid for the copyright, however, did not exceed fifteen guineas. Nor indeed could a work of such moderate size easily obtain a large remuneration.

In the spring of the same year his friend Garrick having become manager of Drury Lane Theatre, he brought out for him 'Irene,' a tragedy, which had been begun at Lichfield, and was finished afterwards partly in London, partly at Greenwich, where he resided for some time. Its success was only moderate; for an awkward incident happened on the first night, when the audience positively refused to let the heroine be strangled on the stage, crying out "murder," in a tone that made it necessary to omit the execution, or at least let it take place behind the scenes; and although

the zealous friendship of the manager obtained for it nine nights of representation, the play then at once dropped, being found wholly deficient in dramatic interest, perhaps too, a little tiresome from the sameness of its somewhat heavy and certainly monotonous diction. Slender as was this success, it had been much smaller still but for many alterations on which Garrick insisted. These were vehemently resisted by the author, with a want of sense and of ordinary reflexion exceedingly unnatural to one of his excellent understanding, and who might easily have seen how very far superior the practical skill and sense of Garrick must be to his own on such subjects. It became even necessary to call in the mediation of a friend, and after all, several requisite changes were not made. However, the benefit of three nights' profits was thus, by the rules of the stage, secured to the author, and the copyright being sold to his friend Dodsley produced him a hundred pounds more. A ludicrous folly of his occurred when this play was first brought out; he must needs appear in a handsome dress, with a scarlet and gold-laced waistcoat, and a gold-laced hat, not only behind the scenes but in the side boxes, from an absurd notion that some such finery was suited to a dramatic author. Certainly, if the feelings of the house in that day resembled those of our own times, this proceeding considerably increased the risk which he ran from his plot, his verse, and his bowstring. A pleasant story is related of his showing the first two acts of his tragedy to a friend of his settled at Lichfield, and holding an office in the Consistory there, Mr. Walmsley, a man of much learning, and who, being greatly his superior in age as well as station, had patronized him in his early years. When he made the natural objection, that the heroine was already as much overwhelmed with distress as she well could be in the result, "Can't I," asked Johnson archly, "put her in the spiritual court?"

The 'Rambler' was another of the more permanently known works with which this ever active period of his life was diversified. It was published twice a-week during the years 1750 and 1751. The 'Idler,' a similar work, appeared in Newbury's 'Universal Chronicle,' a weekly paper, in 1758 and 1759. Both these works were conducted by Johnson with hardly any assistance from the contributions of friends; and the papers were written with extraordinary facility, being generally finished each at one sitting, and sent to the press without even being read over by the author. It is indeed related of the 'Idler,' that being at Oxford when a paper was required, he asked how long it was before the post went, and being told half an hour, he said, "Then we shall do very well;" and sitting down, wrote a number, which he would not let Mr. Langton read, saying, "Sir, you shall not do more than I have done myself." He then folded the paper up and sent it off.

The great work, however, upon which he was about this time constantly engaged was his 'Dictionary,' of which the first announcement was made in 1747, a year or more after he had been at work upon it; and the final publication in two volumes folio, with an elaborate Preface and Grammar, took place in 1755. The prospectus had been inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, then (1747) Secretary of State, and had received, when showed him in manuscript, that able and accomplished person's high approval. It should seem that Johnson had called upon him afterwards and been refused admittance, a thing far from inexplicable when the person happened to be a Cabinet Minister in a laborious department. He had probably not courted his further acquaintance by invitations, but quarrel there was not any between the parties; and when the 'Dictionary' was on the point of appearing, Lord Chesterfield wrote two witty and highly laudatory papers upon it in the 'World,' strongly but delicately

recommending the expected work to all readers and all purchasers. Johnson's pride took fire, and he wrote that letter which is so well known, and has been so much admired for its indignant and sarcastic tone, but which, everything considered, is to be reckoned among the outrages committed by the irritability of the literary temperament. Nor can anything be more humbling, if it be not even ridiculous enough at once to bring the sublime of the epistle down to a very ordinary level, than the unhappy Note which Mr. Boswell's candour and love of accuracy has subjoined, —that Johnson once confessed to Mr. Langton his having received ten pounds from the Earl, but "as that was so inconsiderable a sum, he thought the mention of it could not properly find a place in a letter of the kind this was,"—referring to the passage which speaks very incorrectly of his having received from Lord Chesterfield "not one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour." (I., 237.) It seems almost as incorrect to say, that he had never received one smile of favour; for it is certain that he had been admitted to his society and politely treated. He described him (IV., 353) as of "exquisitely elegant manners, with more knowledge than what he expected, and as having conversed with him upon philosophy and literature." The letter which he wrote appears to have been treated with indifference, if not with contempt, by the noble Secretary of State; for he showed it to any one that asked to see it, and let it lie on his table open that all might read who pleased. The followers of Johnson quote this as a proof of his dissimulation; possibly he overdid it; but they should recollect how little any one was likely to feel severely hurt by such a composition, when he could with truth mention, even if he should not choose to do so, that he had given the writer ten pounds without giving him the least offence.

The stipulated price for the 'Dictionary' was 1575*l.*;

but he had to incur considerable expense in the preparation of it for the press, by having the extracts copied, as well as in the purchase of books which he was obliged to consult. He had for several years to employ three or four amanuenses or clerks, who occupied a room in his house fitted up like an office or a counting-house. In all he employed six, for whom his kindness ever after is known to have been unceasing, and his bounty quite equal to his means of rewarding them. It has also been observed as a proof of his national prejudices being capable of mitigation, that five of the six were Scotchmen. Of the money which he received for this work nearly the whole was anticipated, being received and spent for his support while the composition of the book was going on.

During the laborious period of his life which we have been surveying, he had sustained two losses which deeply affected him,—by his mother's death in 1759, of which I have spoken, and his wife's in 1752, an affliction which deeply impressed itself on his mind. He was not only entirely overwhelmed with grief at the moment of her decease, but continued ever after to mourn for her, and to pray for her soul, which he appears to have thought destined to a middle state of existence before its everlasting rest, although he always put his supplication doubtfully or conditionally. After this loss he received into his lodgings Miss Williams, a maiden lady, daughter of a Welsh physician, who had left her in poor circumstances; and she afterwards became blind. She was a person of excellent understanding and considerable information, but of a peevish temper, which he patiently bore, partly because her constant society was a resource against his melancholy tone of mind, and partly because he really had a compassionate disposition. He could only afford to give her lodging, she finding out of her scanty means her own subsistence, which he occasionally aided by gifts. She died a year before his own decease. Mrs. Des-

moulines was the daughter of his godfather, Dr. Swinfen, and widow of a writing-master; her, too, Johnson received for many years in his house with her daughter, though his rooms were so small, that she and Miss Williams had to live in one apartment. The only satisfaction apparently which he could receive from the society of this lady, was the gratification of his charitable disposition; and he made her an allowance of near thirty pounds a-year from the time that he received his pension.* She survived him.

Robert Levett, a poor apothecary, lived with him in a similar way almost from the time he came to London. He practised among the poor for very small sums; but it was one of Johnson's ignorant prejudices, partly founded on his contracted knowledge of scientific subjects, partly from his not unamiable bias in favour of his friends, that he never could be satisfied with the skill of any medical attendant if Levett did not also assist their care. He died two years before Johnson, who wrote some very affecting verses to the memory of this humble friend. It was among Johnson's fancies to suppose he knew something of medicine and chemistry, because he read occasionally in his accustomed desultory manner parts of old-fashioned books on these subjects; and he even used to make experiments without any method or any acquaintance with the subject, upon mixing, and boiling, and melting different substances, and even upon distilling them. But his knowledge of all the parts of natural science was extremely limited and altogether empirical. Doubtless Levett's conversation was on these matters perfectly level to his companion's, and quite as much as he could bear.

* The temper and dispositions of his poor inmates were far from conducing to their own comfort or to his peace. He describes them in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale:—"Mrs. Williams hates every body; Levett hates Desmoulines, and does not love Williams; Desmoulines hates them both; Polly loves none of them."

Johnson was now in his fifty-fourth year, and had attained a very high, if not the highest station among the literary men of his age and country. Goldsmith had not yet reached the eminence which he afterwards attained. Burke as a man of letters was but little known. Gibbon had not appeared. Hume and Robertson belonged to another part of the island; and Johnson had not only distinguished himself both as a poet and a prose writer, but he had conferred upon English literature the important benefit of the first even tolerably good dictionary of the language, and one the general merit of which may be inferred from the fact, that after a lapse of nearly a century, filled with the monuments of literary labour incalculably multiplied in all directions, no similar work has superseded it. The struggle for subsistence in which he had lived so long, and which he had so long nobly maintained without stooping to any degrading acts, very little even to the resource now so invariably resorted to by literary men, the occupations of party, either in Church or State, had continued during five-and-twenty years with but little intermission, and when long past the middle age, and beginning to feel the effects of time upon his powers of exertion, a proposal was made without his solicitation, or even knowledge, by Mr. Wedderburn, then a rising man at the bar, (afterwards Lord Loughborough,) to the Prime Minister, Lord Bute, who received it favourably, and acted upon it promptly. A pension of three hundred a year was granted to him, and it was granted without the least reference to political considerations — the Minister declaring deliberately, that no services whatever, of any kind, were expected in consideration of the grant; that it had reference to his past labours alone, and that whatever political tracts he might have written, they were not taken into the account, because it was believed that he had, in the composition of them,

only followed the bent of his inclination and expressed his unbiassed opinions.

Nothing could be more opportune than this grant; nothing more entirely change the whole aspect of his situation. When we consider that it put him in possession of a much larger free income, without any exertion whatever, than he had ever been able to earn by a life of hard labour, we at once perceive that there could hardly have been wrought a greater revolution, or a happier, in any man's fortunes. The delicate manner in which the grant was bestowed, heightened the obligation; and, indeed, something might be required to soothe the feeling with which he must have regarded his exposing himself to the taunts of party, and the envy of disappointed men; for he had, but a few years before, gone out of his way to define a pensioner, "a slave of state hired to obey a master," and a pension, "pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country."

The change in his circumstances of course produced as great a change as possible in his habits. He no longer laboured as before to gain money; nor during the remaining twenty-two years of his life do we find him composing any considerable number of works, even for his amusement. His edition of Shakspeare was published in 1765, but begun twenty years earlier, and it had been almost all finished before the grant. He wrote his two pamphlets, 'Taxation no Tyranny,' and 'On the Falkland Island Dispute,'—works of little labour; and the 'Lives of the Poets,' including that of Savage, and several other pieces long before printed by him, was the only work of any consequence which his later years produced.

He now indulged more than ever in desultory reading, and in conversation, which appeared necessary to his existence. Solitude oppressed him, by leaving him a prey to his constitutional malady of low spirits. He was especially afraid of being left alone

in the evening, and therefore loved to pass his time in one or other of the clubs, which he founded for the purpose of having some such resource on stated days. Of these, one attained great eminence, from the number of distinguished men who belonged to it; and it exists at this day. Reynolds, Goldsmith, Burke, Fox, Gibbon, Windham, Beauclerk, Sir William Scott, Canning, Frere, Ellis, were among its members. But he had other weekly clubs of less fame, and he once desired to have one established in the City, which was accordingly done. He somewhat enlarged the circle of his acquaintance as his life became so much less laborious, and he made more frequent excursions to the country, beside going for a few weeks to Paris, and making the tour of Scotland and the Hebrides. His acquaintance with Mr. Boswell began in 1763, and their intercourse was continued till his death, as often as that gentleman happened to be in London. With Mr. Beauclerk and Mr. Langton, his friendship had commenced ten years earlier, and with Sir Joshua Reynolds nearly twenty; with Garrick he had been on intimate terms when he was his pupil, and their friendship had continued ever since his arrival in London. It was one of his peculiarities that he never would say much in favour of his old friend and pupil, but never would allow others to say anything against him. He must have a monopoly of the censure. Miss Burney relates a diverting instance of this in her Memoirs of her father. It had been observed that the great actor was chagrined at the King and Queen receiving coldly his private reading of 'Lethe,' which they had commanded. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "he has no right, in a royal apartment, to expect the hallooing and clamour of the one shilling gallery. The King, I doubt not, gave him as much applause as was rationally his due. And, indeed, great and uncommon as is the merit of Mr. Garrick, no man will be bold enough to assert that he has not

had his just proportion, both of fame and profit. He has long reigned the unequalled favourite of the public; and therefore nobody, we may venture to say, will mourn his hard lot, if the King and the royal family were not transported into rapture upon hearing him read 'Lethe!' But yet, Mr. Garrick will complain to his friends; and his friends will lament the King's want of feeling and taste; but then, Mr. Garrick will kindly excuse the King—he will say that his Majesty might, perhaps, be thinking of something else! that the affairs of America might, possibly, occur to him—or some other subject of state, more important—perhaps—than 'Lethe.' But though he will candidly say this himself, he will not easily forgive his friends, if they do not contradict him!"

Mr. Langton was a Lincolnshire gentleman, of a very elegant turn of mind, and strictly correct life. Mr. Beauclerk was a man of brilliant talents and celebrated for his powers of conversation, but of dissipated habits, and whose connexion with Lady Bolingbroke occasioned her divorce from her husband, upon which she married Mr. Beauclerk. Johnson, however, was so captivated with the society of this gentleman, all the more agreeable to him from the accident of high birth, that he certainly was as much attached to him as to any of his friends, and felt as acutely upon his death. He occasionally went to visit Mr. Langton's family in Lincolnshire, and once was offered by them a considerable living, which he declined. But though he esteemed Mr. Langton's character, and was wont to say, "*Sit anima mea cum Langtono*," it was plain that he enjoyed Beauclerk's society more—and an amusing scene is recorded by Mr. Boswell, of his laughing with his hearty and boisterous mirth at Langton, for refusing to join them on a wild party down the river, on the plea that he was engaged to drink tea with some young ladies.

But a much more important addition was made to

his acquaintance three years after the grant of his pension. He, in 1765, became intimate with Mr. Thrale, the great brewer, and the member for Southwark. He was a man of excellent sense, respectable character, great wealth, proportionable hospitality, and of a very good education; so that nothing could be more erroneous than the prevailing notion that his wife formed the only attraction of his house. She was a lively and clever person, who loved to surround herself with brilliant society, and she obtained great influence with Johnson, who was probably half in love with her unknown to himself; but he always allowed that Mr. Thrale had incomparably more both of learning and of sense, and he never ceased to feel for him the greatest respect and affection. The impression was equally groundless that Mrs. Thrale ruled in the house; the master of it was absolute whenever he wished to make his pleasure known, and although his kindness of disposition might give the mistress a *divisum imperium* in small matters, the form of government was anything rather than a *gynocracy*. From the time of Johnson's introduction, to Mr. Thrale's decease in 1781, and even during the next two years, he might be said to be of the family: he had his apartment both in Southwark, and at their villa of Streatham; he called Thrale always "my Master," Mrs. Thrale "my Mistress:" loving the comforts of life, he here had the constant enjoyment of its luxuries: excellent society was always assembled under their roof, his moody temper was soothed, and his melancholy dispelled by those relaxations, and by having, without the cares of a family, its occupations to distract his mind; when unfortunately for his enjoyment, and on no other account that I can discover unfortunately, the widow contracted a second marriage with an Italian teacher, Mr. Piozzi, which cut Johnson to the heart, and was resented by himself and all his friends as an act of self-degradation that deservedly

put Mrs. Thrale out of the pale of society. It is quite amusing to see the manner in which this step of the lady is taken both by Johnson, who had himself married his mercantile friend's widow, without any means of support but his own industry, nay, who had like Mr. Piozzi, endeavoured, but unsuccessfully, to maintain himself by teaching, and by Miss Burney, the daughter of a music-master, and sister of a Greek teacher. Had Mrs. Thrale been not only seduced, but thrown herself on the stage for subsistence, nay, on the town for a livelihood, these high bred personages could not have mourned more tenderly over her conduct. Her fate, her fall, her sad lot, the pity of friends and exultation of foes,* are the terms applied to the widow of a wealthy brewer, son of a common porter, because she had lowered herself to contract a second marriage with a well educated gentleman, whose circumstancs led him to gain an honest subsistence by teaching the finest music in the world.†

* "I thought," said Johnson in a letter to Sir J. Hawkins, "that either her virtue or her vice would have kept her from such a marriage; she is now become a subject for her enemies to exult over, and for her friends, if she has any left, to forget or to pity."

† Miss Burney's account of Dr. Johnson's vehement feelings on this occasion, is striking.

"Scarcely an instant, however, was the latter left alone in Bolt Court, ere she saw the justice of her long apprehensions; for while she planned speaking upon some topic that might have a chance to catch the attention of the Doctor, a sudden change from kind tranquillity to strong austerity took place in his altered countenance; and, startled and affrighted, she held her peace. A silence almost awful succeeded, though previously to Dr. Burney's absence, the gayest discourse had been reciprocated. The Doctor, then, see-sawing violently in his chair, as usual when he was big with any powerful emotion whether of pleasure or of pain, seemed deeply moved; but without looking at her, or speaking, he intently fixed his eyes upon the fire; while his panic-struck visitor, filled with dismay at the storm which she saw gathering over the character and conduct of one still dear to her very heart, from the furrowed front, the laborious heaving of the ponderous chest, and the roll of the large penetrating wrathful eye of her honoured, but just then, terrific host, sat mute, motionless and sad; tremblingly awaiting a mentally demolishing thunderbolt. Thus passed a few minutes, in which she scarcely dared to breathe; while the respiration of the Doctor, on the contrary, was of asthmatic force and loudness; then, suddenly turning

With all his powers of conversation, and all his willingness to mix with the world, it is certain that Johnson never was received in the select circles of distinguished persons, nor indeed was at all in general society; nor can a better proof be given of the great change which a few years has effected in the social intercourse of London, and of the great contrast which at all times has been exhibited in that of Paris. Johnson was sensible enough of this, but did not repine, for he lived in a small, but highly interesting circle, and there was sufficiently esteemed, indeed treated with unusual observance. He ascribed his neglect by the great to a wrong cause; "Lords and ladies don't like," he said, "to have their mouths stopt." The truth is, that in those days no one was, generally

to her, with an air of mingled wrath and woe, he hoarsely ejaculated, 'Piozzi!' He evidently meant to say more; but the effort with which he articulated that name robbed him of any voice for amplification, and his whole frame grew tremulously convulsed. His guest, appalled, could not speak; but he soon discerned that it was grief from coincidence, not distrust from opposition of sentiment that caused her taciturnity. This perception calmed him, and he then exhibited a face 'in sorrow more than anger.' His see-sawing abated of its velocity, and again fixing his looks upon the fire, he fell into pensive rumination. From time to time, nevertheless, he impressively glanced upon her his full-fraught eye, that told, had its expression been developed, whole volumes of his regret, his disappointment, his astonished indignancy: but now and then it also spoke so clearly and so kindly that he found her sight and her stay soothing to his disturbance, that she felt as if confidentially communing with him, although they exchanged not a word. At length, and with great agitation, he broke forth with 'She cares for no one! You, only—You, she loves still!—but no one—and nothing else! You she loves still.'—A half smile now, though of no very gay character, softened a little the severity of his features while he tried to resume some cheerfulness in adding: 'As . . . . she loves her little finger!'"

Now Johnson was, perhaps unknown to himself, in love with Mrs. Thrale; but for Miss Burney's thoughtless folly there can be no excuse. And her father, a person of the very same rank and profession with Mr. Piozzi, appears to have adopted the same senseless cant, as if it were less lawful to marry an Italian musician than an English. To be sure, Miss Burney says that Mrs. Thrale was lineally descended from Adam de Saltsburg, who came over with the Conqueror. But assuredly that worthy, unable to write his name, would have held Dr. Johnson himself in as much contempt as his fortunate rival, and would have regarded his alliance equally disreputable with the Italian's, could his consent have been asked.

speaking, admitted into patrician society merely for the intrinsic merits of his writings or his talk, without having some access to it through his rank, or his political or professional eminence. Nay, even the greatest distinction in some professions could not open those doors on their massive hinges. The first physicians and the first merchants and bankers were not seen at the tables of many persons in the "west end of the town." It is equally erroneous to suppose that Johnson's rough exterior, or his uncouth and even unpleasant habits, could have prevented his fame and his conversation from being sought after to adorn aristocratic parties in later times. All these petty obstacles would have been easily got over by the vanity of having such a person to show, and indeed by the real interest which the display of his colloquial powers would have possessed among a more refined and better educated generation. The only marvel is, that in an age which valued extrinsic qualities so exclusively, or at least regarded sterling merit as nothing without them, the extraordinary deference for rank and for high station, which Johnson on all occasions showed, and the respect for it which he was well known really to feel, should have had so little effect in recommending him to those who regarded nothing else.

It should seem that public bodies partook in no small measure of the same indifferent feelings towards literary eminence, and regarded rather the rank, or at least the academical station, than the intrinsic merits of those upon whom their honours should be bestowed. Johnson, having been prevented from taking a degree in the ordinary course, as we have seen, although he had resided three years at Oxford, could not obtain one when it would have given him the mastership of an endowed school; and he had attained for many years a high place in the literary world before his Alma (?) Mater would enrol him among her Masters of Arts. He obtained that honorary degree on the

eve of publishing his Dictionary in 1755. No further honours were bestowed until 1775, when a Doctor's degree was conferred upon him, Trinity College, Dublin, having given him the same, ten years before. He seems to have been much more pleased with these compliments, than chagrined at the tardy sense thus shown of his merits; for it must be admitted that Oxford delaying this mark of respect to one of her most eminent pupils so long after the Irish University, with which he had no connexion, had bestowed it, betokened a singular economy in the distribution of honours which are constantly given to every person of rank without any merit whatever, who happens to attend any of the great academical solemnities. Probably he might feel this, for it is observable that he never availed himself of the title thus bestowed upon him. He always called himself Mr. Johnson, as he had done before. He always wrote his name thus on his cards and in his notes, never calling himself Doctor. As for his books, of the three which he published after 1765, the 'Shakspeare' and the 'Tour,' have no name at all in the title-pages, and the 'Lives' have only Samuel Johnson, without either M.A. or LL.D.

In commemorating the treatment, whether of respect or neglect, which Johnson met with, we must not forget the honour which he received from the King, (George III.,) who, hearing that he used to come and read in the fine library at Buckingham House, desired Mr. Barnard, the librarian, to give him notice of his being there, in order that he might gratify a very praiseworthy curiosity, by becoming acquainted with him. This happened in the year 1767, and the particulars of the interview, as collected by Mr. Boswell from various sources, with even more than his wonted diligence, show the King to have conversed both very courteously and like a sensible, well-informed man upon various subjects, and to be acquainted with all the ordinary topics of conversation, both as relating to

books and men. Johnson's demeanour was equally correct; he was profoundly respectful, of course, but he never lowered the tone either of his opinions or of his voice during a pretty long interview.

From the time when the grant of the pension placed him in easy circumstances to the year before his death, when he had a paralytic stroke, no important event occurred in his life, if we except his journey to Scotland in 1772, which gave him an opportunity of seeing all the literary men of that country, and of observing also in the Islands a people emerging from a very low state of civility—but which had very little effect in shaking his rooted prejudice against the Scotch—and an excursion in 1775, for two months, to Paris, in company with Mr. Thrale's family, and Baretti, the author of the 'Italian Dictionary,' one of his most intimate and valued friends. Mr. Boswell has preserved one of the note books in which he kept a diary of his observations on this French tour; and though he appears to have made many and very minute inquiries, no kind of discrimination is observable as having directed his curiosity, and very meagre general information shines through the page. His ignorance of things very generally known, is sufficiently remarkable. Thus he seems never before to have been aware that monks are not necessarily in orders; but he might also have known that though originally they were laymen, yet for many centuries they have been, as indeed their name implies, (regular clergy,) always in orders. He notes with surprise, apparently, that an iron ball swims in quicksilver. He mentions the French cookery at the best tables as unbearably bad, and accounts for their meat being so much dressed, that its bad quality (the best, he says, only fit to be sent to a gaol in England,) would make it uneatable if cooked plain.

The life which he continued to lead during these latter years was on the whole far more agreeable as well as easy than he had ever before enjoyed: for be-

side the entire freedom from all care for his subsistence, and the power which he thus had of indulging in the love of much, but desultory and discontinuous, reading, as well as in the society which looked up to him and humoured his somewhat capricious habits, his melancholy was considerably abated, and could be better kept under control. The family of the Thrales served to give him the quiet and soothing pleasures of a home without any of the anxieties of the domestic state, and with as much authority and more liberty than he could have enjoyed within his own household. His other friends, with whom also much of his time was passed according to the more convivial habits of that day, were among the most distinguished of the age for their talents and their accomplishments. Beside varying his London residence by frequent visits to the Thrales' villa, at the distance beyond which his fixed preference of London to all other abodes, would not easily let him move, he occasionally made excursions, though short ones, to more remote haunts, especially to Oxford, endeared to him both by the severely orthodox genius of the place, (severa religio loci,) by early associations, and by surviving friendships. Some efforts he continued to make in literature and in politics, in perfect freedom of labour, rather as relaxation than as work, and he made them with his wonted success. The pamphlet on the 'American Dispute' was written with great force and effect, and is the best of these pieces. It appeared in 1775. That on the 'Falkland Islands,' distinguished by the eloquent defence of peace, and the powerful description of the evils of war, was published in 1771.

In both these tracts he was avowedly the champion of the Government; but he was also employed by them, or at least acted in concert with them; for he received his materials from the Ministers, and conducted the argument by their instructions, altering whatever they deemed improper or inexpedient, and

admitting his agency, by the defence he made for leaving out one notable passage, "It was their business: if an architect says, I will build finer stones, and the man who employs him says, I will have only these, the employer is to decide." His other pamphlets were, the 'False Alarm,' in 1770, on Wilkes's question, espousing the side of the Ministers, and probably in unwilling connexion with them, and the 'Patriot,' in 1772; on the general election, a short address, written to assist his friend Thrale, then a candidate for the Borough. There can be no doubt that in writing all but the last of these works he felt himself discharging a debt of gratitude to the Government; but they certainly cannot in any respect be charged with speaking a language which was either dictated, or at all influenced, by the highly important favour he had received.

In the middle of 1783, when in his seventy-fourth year, he had the paralytic stroke, to which reference has already been made. He was seized in the night, after having felt himself the day before lighter and better than usual, as is very common in such cases, probably from the exhilarating effects of a quickened circulation. He felt a confusion and indistinctness in his head "for half an minute," and having prayed that his faculties might be preserved, he composed his supplication in Latin verse, for the purpose of trying whether or not his mind remained entire. "The lines," he says in his letter to Mrs. Thrale two days after, "were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good, and concluded myself to be unimpaired in my faculties." He found, however, that he had lost his speech, which did not return till the second day, and was for some time imperfect and unsteady. His recovery, however, from this alarming ailment appears to have been complete, though it probably increased the general weakness of the system, now beginning to show itself in several ways, and especially by an in-

creased difficulty of breathing, the effect of water forming in the chest. For about a year, though he continued in a precarious, and occasionally a suffering state, he yet could enjoy society much as usual in the intervals of his indisposition, and went once or twice into the country for a few days. His occupations continued the same as before, and he attended with much interest, at a friend's near Salisbury, a course of lectures on the new discoveries in pneumatic chemistry. It was supposed that passing the next winter, 1784-5, in a better climate would have a salutary effect, and he was himself much set upon the plan of going to Italy with this view. The Chancellor (Lord Thurlow) being apprised of this design, and informed that some pecuniary assistance would be required, showed every readiness to obtain it from the Government. In this application he was unsuccessful; but for the somewhat discreditable refusal of his colleagues his Lordship made good amends, by offering to advance "five or six hundred pounds on the mortgage of the Doctor's pension," a proposal, as he told Sir J. Reynolds, which he made from a wish that Johnson's delicacy might not be offended by the gift. Dr. Brocklesby, his physician, had likewise offered to settle a hundred a year upon him for the remainder of his life.

That life was now drawing to a close. The difficulty of breathing increased and the dropsical complaint extended itself. He suffered exceedingly, but with exemplary patience. He was attended by the affectionate care of his friends, among whom Mr. Windham was the last that ministered to his earthly comforts. He died on the 13th of December, 1784, having suffered far less from apprehension of the event than his former habit of regarding it with extreme horror, might have led us to expect.

The ample materials furnished by his biographers, and the marked and very plainly distinguishable fea-

tures of Johnson's character both as an author and as a man, render the estimate of his merits and his defects, the description of his peculiarities, an easier task than often falls to the lot of the historian. In order to attain a clear and a correct view of him in both capacities, nothing more remains after carefully considering his life and his writings, than to pierce through the clouds which have been raised by the exaggerated admiration of his followers, and the almost equal injustice of those with whose prejudices his prejudices came in conflict. And the largest deduction that can be fairly made, whether from the praise or the blame, will certainly leave a great deal to extol, and not a little to lament or to condemn.

The prevailing character of his understanding was the capacity of taking a clear view of any subject presented to it, a determination to ascertain the object of search, and a power of swiftly perceiving it. His sound sense made him pursue steadily what he saw was worth the pursuit, piercing at once the husk to reach the kernel, rejecting the dross which men's errors and defect of perspicacity, or infirmity of judgment, had spread over the ore, and rejecting it without ever being tempted by its superficial and worthless hues to regard it with any tolerance. Had he been as knowing as he was acute, had his vision been as extensive as it was clear within narrow limits, he would only have gained by this resolute determination not to be duped, and would not have been led into one kind of error by his fear of falling into another. But it must be allowed, that even in his most severe judgments he was far oftener right than wrong; and that on all ordinary questions, both of opinion and of conduct, there were few men whom it was more hopeless to attempt deceiving either by inaccurate observation, by unreflecting appeals to the authority whether of great names or great numbers, by cherished prepossessions little examined, or by all the various forms

which the cant of custom or of sentiment is wont to assume.

Out of this natural bent of his understanding arose, as naturally, the constant habit of referring all matters, whether for argument or for opinion, to the decision of plain common sense. His reasonings were short; his topics were homely; his way to the conclusion lay in a straight line, the shortest between any two points; and though he would not deviate from it so as to lose himself, he was well disposed to look on either side, that he might gather food for his contemptuous and somewhat sarcastic disposition, laughing at those whom he saw bewildered, rather than pitying their errors.

To the desire of short and easy proof, and the love of accuracy when it could be obtained, and to which he sometimes sacrificed truth by striving after exact reasoning on subjects that admit not of it, we may ascribe his great fondness for common arithmetic, one of the very few sciences with which he was acquainted.

With the vices of such an understanding and such a disposition he was sufficiently imbued, as well as with its excellencies. He was very dogmatical—very confident, even presumptuous; not very tolerant. He was also apt to deal in truisms, and often inclined, when he saw through them himself, to break down an argument, sometimes overwhelming it with the might of loud assertion, sometimes cutting it short by the edge of a sneer. Seeing very clearly within somewhat narrow limits, he easily believed there was nothing beyond them to see; and, fond of reducing each argument to its simplest terms and shortest statement, he frequently applied a kind of reasoning wholly unsuited to the subject matter, pronounced decisions of which the dispute was not susceptible, and fell into errors which more knowing inquirers and calmer disputants, without half his perspicacity or his powers of combining, would easily and surely have avoided.

The peculiarities of his style may be traced to the same source—the characteristic features of his understanding and disposition. What he perceived clearly he clearly expressed; his diction was distinct; it was never involved; it kept ideas in their separate and proper places; it did not abound in synonymes and repetition; it was manly, and it was measured, despising meretricious and trivial ornament, avoiding all slovenliness, rejecting mere surplusage, generally, though not always, very concise, often needlessly full, and almost always elaborate, the art of the workman being made manifest in the plainly artificial workmanship. A love of hard and learned words prevailed throughout; and a fondness for balanced periods was its special characteristic. But there was often great felicity in the expression, occasionally a pleasing cadence in the rhythm, generally an epigrammatic turn in the language as well as in the idea. Even where the workmanship seemed most to surpass the material, and the *word-craft* to be exercised needlessly, and the diction to run to waste, there was never any feebleness to complain of, and always something of skill and effect to admire. The charm of nature was ever wanting, but the presence of great art was undeniable. Nothing was seen of the careless aspect which the highest of artists ever give their masterpieces—the produce of elaborate but concealed pains; yet the strong hand of an able workman was always marked; and it was observed, too, that he disdained to hide from us the far less labour which he had much more easily bestowed.

There is no denying that some of Johnson's works, from the meagreness of the material and the regularity of the monotonous style, are exceedingly little adapted to reading. They are flimsy, and they are dull; they are pompous, and though full of undeniable, indeed self-evident truths, they are somewhat empty; they are, moreover, wrapt up in a style so disproportioned in

its importance, that the perusal becomes very tiresome, and is soon given up. This character belongs more especially to the 'Rambler,' the object of such unmeasured praises among his followers, and from which he derived the title of the Great Moralist. It would not be easy to name a book more tiresome, indeed more difficult to read, or one which gives moral lessons in a more frigid tone, with less that is lively or novel in the matter, in a language more heavy and monotonous. The measured pace, the constant balance of the style, becomes quite intolerable; for there is no interesting truth to be inculcated remote from common observation, nor is there any attack carried on against difficult positions, nor any satirical warfare maintained either with opinions or with persons. There is wanting, therefore, all that makes us overlook the formality and even lumbering heaviness of Johnson's style in his other works; and in this the style forms a very large proportion of the whole, as the workmanship does of filagree or lace, the lightness of which, however, is a charm that Johnson's work wholly wants. It is singular to observe how vain are all his attempts in these papers to escape from his own manner, even when it was most unsuited to the occasion. Like Addison and Steele, he must needs give many letters from correspondents by way of variety; but these all write in the same language, how unlike soever their characters. So that anything less successful in varying the uniformity of the book, or anything less resembling the lightness, the graces, the eloquent and witty simplicity of the great masters, can hardly be imagined. Thus we not only find maiden ladies, like Tranquilla, describing themselves as "having danced the round of gaiety amidst the murmurs of envy and the gratulations of applause; attended from pleasure to pleasure by the great, the sprightly, and the vain; their regard solicited by the obsequiousness of gallantry, the gaiety of wit, and the timidity of love;"

and spoilt beauties, like Victoria, "whose bosom was rubbed with a pomade of virtue, to discuss pimples and clear discolorations;" but we have Bellaria, at fifteen, and hating books, who "distinguishes the glitter of vanity from the solid merit of understanding," and describes her guardians as telling her, but telling her in vain, "that reading would fill up the vacuities of life, without the help of silly or dangerous amusements, and preserve from the snares of idleness and the inroads of temptation;" and Myrtella, at sixteen, who had "learnt all the common rules of decent behaviour and standing maxims of domestic prudence," till Flavia came down to the village, "at once easy and officious, attentive and unembarrassed," when a struggle commenced with the old aunt, who found "girls grown too wise and too stubborn to be commanded, but was resolved to try who should govern, and would thwart her mere humour till she broke her spirit."

Ponderous as such levities are after the 'Spectator' and the 'Tatler,' and heavy indeed as the whole of the 'Rambler' proves to every reader, it is impossible to deny that it contains a great profusion of sensible reflection, or to refuse it the praise of having been produced with a facility altogether astonishing, considering it to bear so manifestly the mark of great labour. The papers were always written in the utmost haste; a part of each being sent to the press, and the rest written while it was printing. Nor did the author almost ever read over what he had written until he saw it in print. We have seen that the 'Idler' was composed in the same hurry. Indeed, Johnson appears to have composed so easily, that he could write as fast as he could copy. That he composed with the greatest ease is, however, certain. He told Miss Burney that the 'Lives of the Poets,' which he never considered lives, but only critical prefaces, were printed without his ever reading the manuscript,

and that he reserved his corrections till he saw the sheets in print. Accordingly, when he complied with her request to have the proof sheets of a life, and she chose that of 'Pope,' she found the margin covered with alterations. He wrote forty-eight printed pages of his 'Life of Savage' in one night, and Mr. Boswell relates that he wrote twice as much of a translation at one sitting; but here there must be some mistake, as no man who wrote Johnson's hand could have written nearly so much. Even his verses were made so easily, that he wrote seventy of his 'Vanity of Human Wishes' in one day, and a hundred in another. These things are believed from the testimony of his friends, and only upon that authority. All internal evidence is clearly against his composition being easy any more than it was natural.

The pamphlets and other occasional tracts of this eminent writer are of a far higher merit than his 'Moral Essays;' and they are so much the more excellent, because they are occasional. The subject is either the attack or the defence, sometimes both combined, of some opinions, some measures, some men. The singularly polemical powers of the author's mind —his controversial propensities—his talent for pointed writing and for declamation, relieved by epigram—his power of sarcasm, and disposition to indulge in it —his plain, common sense way of viewing every subject—and his short, downright, fearless way of handling it, fitted him for such contests beyond almost any one who ever engaged in them; and he had the advantage of writing at a time when the conduct of both political and literary warfare was in the hands of men little capable of able or even of correct writing, and when, except the writings of Junius, and of Burke, and perhaps of Wilkes, nothing had appeared which preferred even a moderate claim to the approval of well informed readers. The American pamphlet, 'Taxation no Tyranny,' and the Review of

Soame Jenyns' treatise 'On the Origin of Evil,' were soon distinguished as the productions of a very superior pen to any before known, at least to any known since the Addisons, the Swifts, and the Steeles took a part in the labours of the ephemeral press. Nor are there any of the Craftsmen and the Examiners equal, upon the whole, in merit to the pamphlets of Johnson, taking all the qualities required in such works into the account, though, doubtless, the exquisite wit of both Addison and Swift has a lightness and a flavour which we in vain look for in the works of their more stately successor; while, as for the merciless execution of Soame Jenyns, the art of periodical criticism being only of late cultivated, nothing can be found to match it at the beginning of the century, if it be not some of the unmeasured attacks of the Scriblerus school upon their humble adversaries.

We are thus naturally led to speak of Johnson's political principles. They were uniformly and steadily those of a high Tory in Church and State. He was of a Jacobite family, and he never laid aside his good wishes towards the Stuart family; but when the madness of 1745, and the subsequent carelessness, ingratitude, and sottish life of the Pretender had extinguished all hopes among his followers, the strong opinions in favour of prerogative, the hatred of the Whig party, and his distrust, indeed dislike, of all popular courses, remained as abiding parts of Johnson's faith and of his feelings on political subjects. But his Jacobite opinions also remained upon the history of the past both in regard to persons and things. He had the greatest admiration and even esteem for Charles II., whose licentious life he was forced to allow; but he declared him to be the best king, excepting James II., that had appeared between the Restoration and the accession of George III. William III. he could not endure, and openly called him, "one of the most worthless scoundrels that ever existed," (Bos., II.

353.) He, of course, had in his eye the family connexion of that illustrious prince with James. There was no abuse he did not lavish on George II.; and in his father he could only find one virtue, that he wished to restore the exiled family, whose merits in Johnson's eyes were plainly the origin of all these violent and absurd opinions. In other respects, however, he was no enemy of liberty, but he wished to see it enjoyed under the patronage of the sovereign and of a parliament representing hereditarily and electively the rank and property of the country. He was no stickler for abuses, but he desired that they might be prudently and cautiously reformed by the wiser and the more respectable portion of the community, not lopped off rashly by the rude hands of the multitude.

Yet he so greatly loved established things, so deeply venerated whatever had the sanction of time, that he both shut his eyes to many defects in his view consecrated by age, and unreasonably transferred to mere duration the respect which reason itself freely allows to whatever has the testimony of experience in its favour. The established Church, the established Government, the established order of things in general, found in him an unflinching supporter, because a sincere and warm admirer; and giving his confidence entirely, he either was content to suspend his reason in the great majority of instances, or, at least, to use it only for the purpose of attaining the conclusion in favour of existing institutions, and excluding all farther argument touching their foundations. The manner in which these feelings rather than principles broke out, even on trifles, was often sufficiently ludicrous. When he went to Plymouth, where he found a new town grown up, he always regarded the "Dockers" (so they were called) as upstarts and aliens, siding zealously in the local disputes with the old established town. He once exclaimed, "I hate a Docker;" and again, half laughing at his own half-pretended zeal,

when there was a question of watering the new town, "No, no!" said he, "I am against the Dockers: I am a Plymouth man. Rogues! let them die of thirst; they shan't have a drop!" This was more than half jest; but no doubt can be entertained that his dislike of the American cause, and his exertions for the mother country, had their root in the same soil of rank prejudice—a prejudice against the new people as much as an opinion against their claims. "I am willing," he once said, "to love all mankind except an American;" and, he roared out with much abuse, "he'd burn and destroy them."—(Boswell, III. 314.) "Sir," said he on another occasion, "they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging."—(III. 327.)

Akin to this were his strong and even intolerant national prejudices. Of the French he ever spoke with an unmeasured and an ignorant contempt. He could not but allow that there were many successful cultivators of letters in France: indeed, he admitted that there "was a great deal of learning there," and ascribed it to the number of religious establishments; but he maintained that the men generally knew no more than the women; that their books were superficial; that their manners were bad; that they are a "gross, ill-bred, untaught people;" nay, that their cookery is unbearable, and their meat so vile as to be only fit for sending to feed prisoners. But his prejudices were to the full as strong against the Scotch; towards whom no reflection, no civility experienced in their hospitable country, no intercourse with the most distinguished and most deserving individuals, could ever reconcile him. With this, and with most of his other prejudices, a strong taint of religious as well as political bigotry mixed itself. The Presbyterian form of polity he could not bear; it was of too republican a caste, and it wholly rejected the "regimen of Prelates."

If his political opinions were strong, his religious ones were stronger still; and after wavering, even disbelieving, at one time, and for some years "caring for none of these things," he became one of the most sincerely believing, and truly pious Christians that ever professed the faith of the Gospel. That he had very minutely, or very learnedly, examined the various points of controversy connected with this most important subject cannot be affirmed, nor even that he had with adequate patience, and with undisturbed calmness, scrutinized the foundations of his own general belief. His extreme anxiety to believe; his nervous dread of finding any cause for doubt; his constitutional want of some prospect on which to fix his hopes; his excessive alarm at the appearance of any cloud arising over that prospect, prevented him from possessing his soul in the perfect peace and unruffled serenity necessary for him who would rise to the height of this great argument, nay indisposed him altogether to enter upon the discussion. He regarded all who contended, however conscientiously, and however decorously, against the truths of Revelation, as not only enemies, but criminals. He never could bear the presence of any such persons as were known to hold infidel opinions. He openly avowed his abhorrence of them, and not only proclaimed his belief of their guilt in harbouring such sentiments, but of their also being generally men of wicked lives. Thus, when a zealous but thoughtless person had once said, that the character of an infidel was more detestable than that of a man notoriously guilty of an atrocious crime, and some one ventured to deny this strange assertion, Johnson immediately said, "Sir, I agree with him: for the infidel would be guilty of any crime if he were inclined to it."—(Boswell, III. 52.)

His impatience of hearing any one commended whose orthodoxy was suspected is well known; but when a person of known heterodox opinions was in

question, he broke through all bounds, and once being at Oxford, in a company into which Dr. Price came, he instantly got up and left the room. Dr. Price was at that time only known by his unitarian writings, and had published nothing on politics, except his calculations touching reversionary payments may be so considered. When some years later he attended a course of chemical lectures, in which of necessity Dr. Priestley's name was frequently mentioned as a great discoverer, he knit his brows, and said with a stern voice: "Why do we hear so much of Dr. Priestley?" It was necessary to pacify him by stating, what, however, the lecturer must have before said, that the discoveries were Dr. Priestley's. (Boswell, IV. 251.)

His abhorrence of David Hume is well known, and his grossly insulting Adam Smith, because he had in a private letter, which was afterwards published without his consent, described the death of the philosopher as calm and cheerful, and his life as virtuous, has been often mentioned. He is said to have given him the lie at Glasgow, in a company of literary men assembled for the purpose of showing civility to the renowned English traveller; but this anecdote cannot possibly be true.* It is certain, however, that, while he would not suffer Hume or Smith to be introduced, he endured the intimate and familiar society of some men very well known to have no great reverence for religion or belief in its doctrines, but whose rank and manners pleased him—and as for morality, with all his high-sounding talk about its obligations in general, he both associated with persons whose lives were notoriously profligate, and maintained opinions of a somewhat loose nature upon some particular heads; such as underrating conjugal fidelity on the husband's part.

His alarm about the foundations of his belief, seemed

* It is related on the authority of Sir Walter Scott, a professed dealer in curious stories, and not very nice in scrutinizing his authorities. Johnson's visit to Scotland was in 1773; Hume died in 1776.

always to betoken some little misgiving—some indication that he was most anxious to believe, and would fain have a firmer faith than he had. When in a fit of gloom among his Oxford friends, he was reminded, by way of comforting him, that surely he had light and proof enough, he said shortly and significantly, "I wish to have more." His ever hankering after "more" was betrayed by his strong disposition to believe in spirits, ghosts, apparitions. He never would suffer the possibility of these to be rejected, or the belief in them to be treated with the least contempt; and though on such a subject he could not be so dogmatical as was his wont upon other points of faith, he yet always stood out most dogmatically for the credit of human testimony; strenuously contending for it wherever gross improbability did not counteract its effect—nay, even willing to set it against no slight defect of probability in the circumstances. It was plain that this bias connected itself in his mind with the evidences of Revelation; for the general turn of his mind was to regard reasonable probability, and to be somewhat overbearing in rejecting positions, either contrary to general principle, or inconsistent with plain reason, or in any other way unlikely to be true.

It is equally certain that his deference to authority was confined to questions of religion and policy. Upon all other subjects he was an independent thinker; upon these he was ever a stickler for authority or a willing slave, but he was desirous of having some deciding power, some competent jurisdiction, which upon religious points should preclude all doubt, and in obedience to which he might repose undisturbed. He was willing to support the powers that be on temporal points, that he might maintain discipline in society and preclude both the doctrines and the exertions of those who are given to change. No man ever held these opinions or showed these feelings with greater consistency.

Nevertheless there were occasions on which the masculine strength of his understanding broke through the fetters which his fears, or his temporal or his political habits of thinking, had forged for it. Thus he always was an enemy of Negro Slavery, and once at Oxford, in a company of grave doctors, gave as a toast, "The insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies,* and success to them." In speaking of intolerable abuses, even by the Supreme Legislative power, he held the right of resistance; for in no other sense can such expressions as these be taken: "If the abuse be enormous, nature will rise up, and claiming her original rights, overturn a corrupt political system." The misgovernment of Ireland he equally felt with the Colonial Slave system itself: "Let the authority of the English Government perish," he exclaimed, "rather than be maintained by iniquity. Better to hang and draw people at once, than by unrelenting persecution to beggar and starve them, and grind them to powder by disabilities and incapacities." (Boswell, II., 120.) This was said in 1770, eight years before the first relaxation of the penal code; but in the 'Rambler' and the 'Idler' is to be found as clear and as powerful a statement of the whole argument against capital punishment, and also against imprisonment for debt, as can anywhere be met with, and those papers were published as early as 1752.†

The occasional writings of which we have been speaking, and the mention of which introduced these particulars regarding his opinions, were by far his best works, until very late in life he wrote his 'Lives of the Poets,' the production on which his fame as an author chiefly rests. But in his earlier years there were, beside

* Of his biographer's many absurdities, it is none of the least that when entering his protest against Johnson's anti-slavery opinion, he seriously declares, that the abolishing the slave traffic would be "to shut the gates of mercy on mankind." (III., 222.)

† See particularly 'Rambler,' No. cxiv.; 'Idler,' Nos. xxii. xxxviii.

the celebrated pamphlets and other controversial pieces of which alone I have treated, a great number of more obscure performances which he contributed chiefly to periodical works; and many of these have very considerable merit, nor are they generally speaking written in the wordy and solemn style which he seems to have used indeed quite naturally, but rather to have reserved for higher occasions. The most considerable of these writings are his 'Life of Sir Francis Drake,' a long, unaffected, and minute narrative; but in which he, strangely enough, neither tells us when that great man was born, nor how old he was when he died; and his 'Memoirs of Frederick II. of Prussia,' written in 1756, which but for a few passages (as where he speaks of the old king's grenadiers being chosen to "propagate procerity," and of "providing heirs for their habiliments,") might be read by any one, without ever suspecting who was the author. It was his rare lot as a reviewer, to write a criticism upon a work of Sir Isaac Newton; his 'Five Letters to Bentley,' having been published while Johnson contributed to the 'Gentleman's Magazine.' It is certain that he treated this most venerable of all the sons of men, respecting whom he was wont to say, that had he lived in heathen times, he would have been worshipped as a god, in no very different way from any other author, whose writings chanced to come before him in his critical capacity. Beside the passage which follows, the review consists of five short paragraphs, and one is in these words, coming after a quotation:—

"Let it not be thought irreverence to this great name, if I observe, that by matter evenly spread through infinite space, he now finds it necessary to mean matter not evenly spread; matter not evenly spread will indeed commence, but it will commence as soon as it exists; and in my opinion this puzzling question about matter, is only how that could be that never could have been, or what a man thinks on when

he thinks of nothing."—Of which petulance it is enough to remark, as might well be supposed, that Newton being entirely right, his reviewer is wholly wrong.

Of the Prefaces to his own or other men's works, it is not necessary to speak in detail. The most ambitious is that to the Dictionary, which is powerfully written; but promises more than it performs, when it professes to give a history of the English language; for it does very little more than give a series of passages from the writings in the Anglo-Saxon and English tongues of different ages. The Dictionary itself, with all its faults, still keeps its ground, and has had no successor that could supplant it. This is owing to the admirable plan of giving passages from the writers cited as authorities for each word, and this part of the design is very well executed. Hence the book becomes almost as entertaining to read, as useful to consult. The more difficult task of definition has been less happily performed; but far better than the etymological part, which neither shows profound knowledge, nor makes a successful application of it. The compiler appears to have satisfied himself with one or two authorities, and neither to have chosen them well, nor consulted them with discrimination. Of any attempts at a deeper and more philosophical study, either as regards the structure or the grammar of our language, he cannot be said ever to have had the credit; but if he at any time was so far fortunate, Horne Tooke has very mercilessly stript him of it.

The Preface to his Shakespeare certainly is far superior to his other introductory discourses, both fuller of matter and more elaborate. His remarks on the great dramatist are generally speaking sound and judicious; many of them may even, on a subject sufficiently hackneyed, be deemed original. The boldness with which his many critical objections were offered, deserves not the less praise that Shakespeare's

numberless and gross faults are easy to discern; because, in presence of the multitude, one might say, even of the English nation at large, their obvious nature and considerable magnitude has never made them very safe to dwell upon. Nor was it a moderate courage that could make Johnson venture upon the plain statement of a truth, however manifest, yet very unpalatable, that "not one play, if it were now exhibited as the work of a contemporary writer, would be heard to the conclusion." The Preface is more to be commended than the work itself. As a commentator, he is certainly far from successful.

The tour in Scotland produced, in 1775, his 'Journey to the Western Islands,' certainly one of his least valuable writings. The strong prejudices against the Scotch under which he laboured, and which he may be said to have cherished, partly from perverseness, partly in a kind of half jest, certainly do not break out as might have been expected; and nothing can be more unfair than the attacks made upon him by the zeal of national feeling as if he unjustly described a country in which he had been hospitably received. This charge is so plainly without foundation, nay, so kindly does he express himself, so respectfully, so gratefully of all with whom he came in contact, and so just is he almost always to the merits both of the country and its inhabitants, that no one can hesitate to what cause he shall ascribe the violence of the animosity excited by his book. Had he only believed in 'Ossian's Poems,' nothing would ever have been heard but satisfaction with the 'Journey' and respect for its author. His opinion was strong, his arguments were powerful; he plainly gave the right name to an attempt at deceiving, which had failed with him: it was highly offensive to those concerned in the fabrication, and it was somewhat disrespectful to their dupes; his unqualified opinion remained unrefuted; his arguments are to this day unanswered, and the believers found it

more easy to rail at him than to refute. But though the work cannot be charged with unfairness or even with prejudice, it must be admitted to be superficial and indeed flimsy. Less entertaining than most books of travels, it is solemn about trifles, and stately without excuse, so as not rarely to provoke a smile, at the disproportion between the sound and the sense. He has himself in the concluding sentence of the book, very fairly stated the reason why his remarks must needs have little value, his inquiries be imperfect, and his wonder often misplaced; only that his want of information, which he confines to national manners, is pretty generally apparent on all the subjects he touches upon. "Novelty and ignorance must always be reciprocal, and I cannot but be conscious that my thoughts on national manners are the thoughts of one who has seen but little."

We have now considered all his prose writings, except the 'Lives of the Poets' his greatest and best. The design of publishing a good and full edition of the English Poets, had been formed by the booksellers in the year 1777, and they asked him to give a short life and criticism, by way of preface, to each. They were to choose the poets, and he was to write upon each one thus selected. He at once agreed, and being desired to name his price, very modestly fixed on £200; but they gave him £300. He was afterwards allowed to recommend the insertion of a few other lives: and it seems well to have justified their being themselves the selectors, that the four whom he added were Blackmore, Watts, Pomfrett, and Yalden, the worst in the collection, and of whose works none ought to have been inserted, except Pomfrett's 'Choice,' and perhaps a few passages of Blackmore's 'Creation,' though nothing can be more exaggerated than Johnson's praise of that poem, as "transmitting him to posterity among the first favourites of the English Muse."* The

* It must be admitted, indeed, that Addison ('Spectator,' No. 339.)

omission of Goldsmith in this collection is wholly beyond one's comprehension; whether we regard the interests of the booksellers, or the taste and the friendship of the biographer who had caused the insertion of Blackmore and Yalden. These prefaces, excepting that of Savage, the criticism on Pope's 'Epitaphs,' and one or two similar pieces, were all written towards the end of his life: the first half being published when he was seventy, and the remainder when he was seventy-two years of age.

The merit of this work is very great, whether we regard the matter or the style—for the composition is far more easy and natural, far less pompous and stately, and the diction both more picturesque and more simple than in any other of his writings. The measured period, the balance of sentences, and the diffuseness arising from this desire of symmetry, is still in a good degree retained; but it is far less constant, and therefore palls less on the appetite than in any of his former works.

The narrative has no great merit, either in respect of the composition, or in the fulness of its details; consequently as a work of biography it has not any great claim to our admiration. But some of the anecdotes are well and shortly related, and some of the characters strikingly and skilfully drawn, with a sufficiently felicitous selection of particulars and a remarkable force of diction. There are not wanting declamatory passages of considerable power, but these are very inferior to the more quiet, and graphic portions, and through the whole work there prevails a tone of piety and virtue which shows the love of these excellences to have been deeply rooted in the writer's mind, and to have always guided his feelings. There is, too, an amiable desire shown to give merit its re-

had described this poem as "executed with great mastery," and as "one of the noblest productions of English verse," but he plainly was seduced by what he also mentions, its excellent intention, and its usefulness in a religious view.

ward; nor do the author's prejudices interfere with this just course, except in a very few instances, of political feelings warping his judgment, or indignation at impiety blinding him to literary excellence, or of admiration for religious purity giving slender merits an exaggerated value in his eyes. The justness of his taste may be in all other cases admitted; great critical acuteness is everywhere exercised; extensive reading of ancient and modern poetry is shown; and occasionally philosophical subjects are handled with considerable happiness both of thought and of illustration.

The general opinion has always held up Savage's life as the master-piece of this work, but certainly under the impression made by strong invective, powerful, though somewhat turgid declamation. There is beyond comparison, more, both of historical genius, and of critical acumen in the Lives of Dryden, of Cowley, and of Pope.

His 'Dryden' is distinguished by judicious and fair criticism, both on the inimitable poems and as inimitable prose of that great writer. Nothing especially can be finer or more correct than the estimate of his prose style, and the concluding summary of his general merits as a poet particularly, is not only full, but composed with a simplicity and elegance which we shall in vain seek in Johnson's earlier writings. "Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that united his language with such a variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught *sapere et fari*, to think naturally and express forcibly. He taught us that it was possible to reason in rhyme. He showed us the true bounds of a translator's liberty. What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry, embellished by Dryden; *Lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit;* he found it brick and he left it marble."

The 'Cowley' was by Johnson preferred to all his other lives, owing probably to the masterly dissertation upon the metaphysical poets, a name which appears to have been very inaccurately chosen, as their writings have nothing of metaphysics but its occasional obscurity, and are rather distinguished by pedantic display of misplaced learning, and constant striving after wit, equally unseasonable and far-fetched. Johnson's 'Essay' is, however, admirable in every particular: full of sound remarks, eloquently composed, sparkling with wit, rich in illustration, and, above all, amply attaining its object, by giving a description of the thing, the subject-matter, at once faithful and striking. It must certainly be placed at the head of all his writings. The criticisms on Cowley's various poems are equally to be admired. Nothing can be more discriminating, more learned, more judicious. Nor can we, when hurried on by admiration of so much excellence and such just remarks, pause upon the strange error with which the life of a metaphysical poet sets out, in defining genius to be the "mind's propensity to some certain science or employment," as if the will and the power were one and the same thing.

In speculative or argumentative writing, the life of Pope is not equal to that of Cowley; yet while its critical merits are fully equal, it excels that and all Johnson's other works, in the skilful narrative and the happy selection of particulars to describe personal character and habits. His admiration of Pope's poetry, its fine sense, its sustained propriety of diction, its unbroken smoothness of versification, was great; it was natural to the similarity of his own tastes. Nor was he ever patient of the affectation or the paradox which denied Pope to be a poet. But he appears to have had very little respect for his person, and he has painted him in a manner to lower him almost without any relief. It would be difficult to fancy a greater assemblage of small matters, calculated to make their

subject look paltry, than we find in the eight or nine pages devoted to a description of him,—as his being "protuberant behind and before;" "comparing himself to a spider;" "being so low of stature, that he must be brought to a level with the table by raising his seat;" "being dressed by the maid, and with difficulty kept clean."—"Sometimes he used to dine with Lord Oxford privately, in a velvet cap. His dress of ceremony was black, with a tie wig and a little sword. When he wanted to sleep, he nodded in company, and once slumbered at his own table, while the Prince of Wales was talking of poetry."

Of his other Lives some, as that of Savage, have been praised too much; some, as that of Milton, too severely censured. It cannot be denied that the former is written with a rare power of invective, though somewhat swollen and monotonous; but its partiality to the subject, which both blinds the author to his friend's defects, and fills him with a very exaggerated idea of his poetical merits, forms the principal defect. That he had strong prepossessions against Milton's political opinions cannot be doubted; but it is extremely incorrect to affirm, as has too generally been affirmed, that this feeling made him unfair to that great poet's merits. No one can read his criticism on 'Paradise Lost' without perceiving that he places it next to the Iliad, and in some respects on an equal, if not a higher level. His praise of it in the 'Rambler' is equally ample. His objections are not at all groundless: and although to the lesser pieces he may not be equally just, it is certain that, except to the 'Lycidas,' he shows no very marked unfairness, while, in observing the faults of the others, he largely commemorates their beauties. The 'Life of Swift,' which, as a piece of biography, stands high in the collection, is disfigured by more prejudice than any other. The merits of that great writer's poetry are almost entirely overlooked, and his prose works, especially the 'Gul-

liver,' are undervalued in a degree which, when we recollect Johnson's own talent for sarcasm, and his proneness to see in a ludicrous light the objects of his scorn or his aversion, would seem incomprehensible, or only to be explained by the supposition that his religious feelings were roused against one whom he regarded as having, like Sterne, an object of his special scorn, disgraced by his writings his sacred profession. The prejudice which he entertained against Gray, on the other hand, was entirely confined to his poetry, which he on all occasions undervalued even much more than he has ventured to do in the 'Life' of that poet. He was used to call him dull in every sense, both as a writer and in society.

Though generally just in his criticisms, yet he would sometimes in conversation give his opinion with great exaggeration, especially when his personal likings or dislikings were at issue: of this a memorable example is given by Mr. Boswell. On Goldsmith's merits being the subject of conversation, he dogmatically set him as an historian above all those of this country, naming Robertson in particular, and admitting that he had never read Hume.

It is not, however, only in works of judgment as his criticisms, or of narrative as his lives, or of dissertation and argument, as his moral and controversial writings, that Johnson attained great eminence. In works of imagination he is to be reckoned a very considerable artist, and to be ranked clearly among the English classics. The 'Rasselas' might not, of itself, have sufficed to support this character, for it is cold in the colouring, and shows little play of fancy, belonging to the class of philosophical romances, the least fitted to excite a lively interest, or to command continued attention, unless when enlivened by either great powers of wit, or recommended by extraordinary beauty of composition, or ministering to the love of novelty by strange opinions. While the book which, in some

respects, it most resembles, the great master-piece of Voltaire, is not easily laid down by him that takes it up for the hundredth time, the reader who first attempts the 'Abyssinian Candide' feels that he has imposed on himself a task rather than found a pleasure or even a relaxation. The manner is heavy, and little suited to the occasion; the matter is of a very ordinary fabric, if it is safe and wholesome; there is nothing that shines except the author's facility of writing in a very artificial style, as soon as we are informed, by external evidence, of the whole having been written in a few nights. He perhaps, had some kind of misgiving that it was not a successful effort, for he had never looked at it till two-and-twenty years after it was written, when a friend happening to have it who was travelling with him, Johnson read it with some eagerness.

But his Poetry belongs to a different rank. That his Tragedy was a great failure on the stage has been already related; that it is of extreme dulness, of a monotony altogether insufferable, and therefore tires out the reader's patience quite as much as it did the auditor's, is true; that most of his lesser pieces are only things of easy and of fairly successful execution is likewise certain, with perhaps the exception of his verses on Robert Levett's death, which have a sweetness and a tenderness seldom found in any of his compositions. But had he never written anything after the 'Imitations of Juvenal,' his name would have gone down to posterity as a poet of great excellence —one who only did not reach equal celebrity with Pope, because he came after him, and did not assiduously court the muse.

In truth, these two pieces are admirable, both for their matter, their diction, and their versification. In closeness of imitation, indeed, they have a moderate degree of merit, the original verse doing no more than furnishing a peg whereon to hang the imitation, and

often not even that, and a line and a half of Latin being in one place the only excuse for sixteen of English. But if we leave on one side the Latin altogether, the poems are truly excellent. They abound in sterling sense, happily clothed in a language full of point, illustrated by as happy a selection as possible of examples, though figures are very sparingly introduced; and the ear is as well filled with the harmony of the correct and smooth verse as the mind is with the rich, strong, and appropriate diction. There is little of metaphor; the fancy of the bard is not much drawn upon; his feelings are not at work to affect those of his readers; he is operating with the head and upon the understanding; he is now and then indignant, often contemptuous, once or twice only pathetic; but for eloquence in harmonious verse, for intellectual vigour tuned to numbers, it would be difficult to name any higher feats in any tongue. Many of the remarks already made on the moral and descriptive poetry of Voltaire* have their application to these great performances; and it is no small praise of any work of genius that it may boast some similarity with what must be admitted to bear away the palm from Voltaire's other serious poems.

The most splendid and the most renowned passage in these pieces is the Charles XII.; finer by a good deal than the Hannibal of Juvenal, of which it much rather fills the place than betrays the imitation. The Charles is certainly finer than the Hannibal in all but one point. There is nothing in Johnson to be compared with the proud, insulting scorn of

> I demens curre per Alpes,
> Ut pueris placeas, et declamatio fias,

not lowered in the tone by Dryden's exquisite and literal verse,

> Go, climb the rugged Alps, ambitious fool,
> To please the boys, and be a theme at school!

* Pp. 41,42.

The Xerxes, too, of Juvenal is finer than the Xerxes of Johnson, who has, however, added his Bold Bavarian one of the best passages of the kind in his poems.

Were I to name the lines that please me most in these two pieces I should venture to give those in which there are both an unusual mixture of pathos and a happy play of imagination, as rare in Johnson's verse—I mean the lines on Human Life.

> "New Sorrow rises as the day returns,
> A sister sickens, or a daughter mourns.
> Now kindred merit fills the sable bier,
> Now lacerated friendship claims a tear;
> Year chases year, decay pursues decay,
> Still drops some joy from withering life away.
> New forms arise and different views engage,
> Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage,
> Till pitying nature signs the last release,
> And bids afflicted worth retire to peace."

Nothing, with perhaps the exception of the last couplet but one, can be finer: and the couplet immediately preceding that more doubtful one is most admirable, giving an image at once lively, beautiful, and appropriate. It is recorded of Johnson that he often would repeat, with much emotion, those lines of the Georgics, in a similar vein, and which probably he had in his mind when he composed this fine passage. Assuredly, we may in vain search all the Mantuan tracery of sweets for any to excel them in the beauty of numbers, or in the tenderness of the sentiment, provided we abstract them from the subject to which they are applied.

> "Optima quæque dies miseris mortalibus ævi
> Prima fugit; subeunt morbi tristisque senectus;
> Et labor, et duræ rapit inclementia mortis." *

As far as close imitation goes, that is, translation, in

* "Swift fly the joys to anxious mortals known,
Swiftest the sweetest, ere yet tasted, gone!
Disease, and toil, and age fill up our day,
And death relentless hurries us away."

these finer poems, they fall immeasurably below the noble verses of Dryden.

Thus the Xerxes of the latter is far finer than Johnson's, who never would have dared to make such a translation as Dryden's of

> "Altos
> Defecisse amnes, epotaque flumina Medo
> Prandente."
>
> "Rivers, whose depth no sharp beholder sees,
> Drunk, at an army's dinner, to the lees."

Hardly would have ventured on this,

> "Et madidis cantat quæ Sostratus alis."
>
> "With a long legend of romantic things
> Which in his cups the boozy poet sings."

In the concluding passage of the Satire the two artists approach each other, and the original, more nearly: but Dryden is considerably above Johnson.

> "Fortem posce animum et mortis timore carentem,
> Qui spatium vitæ extremum inter munera ponit
> Naturæ,"

is given much better, with more spirit, and very closely by

> "A soul that can securely death defy
> And count it Nature's privilege to die;"

than by

> "For faith that panting for a happier seat,
> Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat."

And Dryden has nothing which corresponds to the unintelligible verse,

> "For Nature sovereign o'er transmuted ill."

The art of translation, in which Johnson's love of accuracy qualified him to excel, as well as his facility of pointed composition, was possessed in a much higher degree by Dryden than either by Johnson or indeed by any one else. That he was unequal in his versions, as in all his works, is certain; and his having

failed to render in perfection the diction of Virgil, which can hardly be approached in any modern tongue but the Italian, is no reason for overlooking his extraordinary genius displayed in this most difficult line. I have always read with pain the remarks on Dryden's translations, or rather on his 'Virgil,' in Mr. Campbell's 'Essay on English Poetry;' and the rather that, when estimating Dryden's power as a translator, he scarcely mentions his 'Juvenal,' and says nothing at all of his 'Ovid' and 'Lucretius;' these, with 'Juvenal,' being past all doubt among his greatest works. But, indeed, he consigns to equal silence the immortal Ode, which, with the exception of some passages in Milton, is certainly the first poem in our language.* Had Mr. Campbell expressed himself coldly of such translations, such metrical doers into crabbed and unpoetical English, as have of late been praised, merely because readers, ignorant of Italian, wish to read Dante without the help of a dictionary, he might have more easily been forgiven. Towards Dryden he is wholly unjust.† Nor had he apparently a due value for the poetry of

* I had often found in my deceased friend a disposition to undervalue that great ode. At length it broke out, the last time I saw him, just before he went to Boulogne, where he died. He expressed himself with extreme bitterness of attack on the bad taste of the world, for admiring it so highly; no one could doubt that his jealousy was personally irritated; a feeling wholly unworthy of one who had written his admirable songs.—I trust that nothing in the text may be supposed to have been written with any disrespect towards Mr. Campbell's Essay, which is a work in every way worthy of its author. Many of the critical observations have the peculiar delicacy which might be expected from so eminent a poet. Many parts of it are written with much felicity of diction. Some passages show all the imagination of a truly poetical genius. The description, for instance, of a launch, is fine poetry in all but the rhythm.

† It is remarkable that Mr. Campbell, in selecting proofs from Pope, (whom he most justly defends from all the puny attacks of taste vitiated by theory, and judgment perverted by paradox,) should, to show his power of picturesque description, have omitted the finest example of all, the Italy in his 'Dunciad:'

> "To happy convents, buried deep in vines,
> Where slumber abbots purple as their wines," &c.

Johnson. He includes the 'Vanity of Human Wishes' among the specimens, but he never mentions Johnson at all among the poets whom he commemorates. Bestowing so disproportioned a space upon Goldsmith renders it plain that he undervalued Johnson. For though Goldsmith is superior to him, they are too near in merit, and come from schools too much alike to authorize him who sets the one so high, to neglect or undervalue the other.

Of Johnson's Latin verses it remains to speak, and they assuredly do not rise to the level of his English, nor indeed above mediocrity. The translation of Pope's 'Messiah,' however, a work of his boyhood, gave a promise not fulfilled in his riper years. His not unfrequent efforts in this line are neither distinguished by the value of the matter nor the felicity of the diction; nor is he always correct in his quantity. Such offences as 'Litterâ Skaiæ,' for an Adonian in his Sapphics to 'Thralia dulcis,' would have called down his severe censure on any luckless wight of Paris, or of Edinburgh, who should peradventure have perpetrated them; nor would his being the countryman of Polignac, or of by far the finest of modern Latinists, Buchanan, have operated except as an aggravation of the fault.*

It remains to consider Johnson's personal character and habits. Nor can we here avoid, first of all, attending to the rank which he held among those who either cultivate conversation as an art, or indulge in it as a relaxation, both pleasing and useful, from severer occupations. That there have been others who shone more in society, both as instructive and as amusing companions, is certain. Swift's range was confined, but within its limits he must have been very great. Addison, with an extremely small circle, has left a great reputation in this kind. Steele was probably more

* *Variabilis* was always objected to by Parr, and it is not of pure Latinity, though to be found, I believe, in Apuleius, a mean authority.

various and more lively, though less delightful. But Bolingbroke's superiority to all others cannot be doubted; and nearer our times Burke could hardly be surpassed, though his refinement was little to be extolled; while in our own day Windham, with almost all that his friend possessed, had an exquisite polish, to which none that have been named but Bolingbroke could make any pretension. Yet, whether because all these, except Steele, had important public stations to fill, or because they did not so much make society the business of their lives, or because their very excellence in conversation prevented them from being mannerists, or finally, because no one, except in Swift's case, thought of giving their names the termination in *ana;* certain it is, that they do not fill any thing like the same space with Johnson in this particular. He lent himself, too, very readily, and, indeed, naturally to occupying this foreground; for he delighted in dogmatical sentences easily carried away; he spoke in an epigram style that first seized on men's attention and then fixed itself in their memory; he loved polemical discussion, and was well fitted for it by his readiness, by the flow of both his sayings and his point, and by the plain and strong sarcasm which he had ever ready at a call. His talk, indeed, was akin to his writings, for he wrote off-hand, and just as easily as he spoke. He loved to fill a chair, surrounded with a circle well known to him, and *ex cathedra* to deliver his judgments. It cannot be said that this was any thing like a high style of conversation; it had nothing like full or free discussion; it had little even like free interchange of sentiments or opinions; it was occasionally enlivened with wit, oftener broken by a growl or a sneer from him and from him alone; but his part of it was always arrogant and dictatorial; nor after men's curiosity had once been gratified by assisting at one of these talks, did any but the small number of his familiar and admiring friends often desire to repeat the

experiment. His talk was most commonly for victory, rather than directed to the clearing up of rational doubt, or the ascertaining of important truth: nor unless upon the serious subject of religion, and upon some of the political points involved in the Whig and Tory controversy, did he ever seem to care much on which side he argued, dogmatised, laughed boisterously, or sneered rudely. His manners were, in some trifling particulars, formal and courtly; that is to say, he greatly regarded rank and station, bowed even more profoundly to dignitaries of the church than to temporal peers, and showed overdone courtesy to women, unless when his temper was ruffled by opposition; but in all that constitutes a well-bred person—abnegation of self, equable manner, equal good humour on all subjects of talk, undistinguishing courtesy to all persons—it would not be easy to name any person more entirely defective among those who have ever lived in good company. His external and accidental defects added much to the outward roughness, but were wholly independent of the real want of good breeding by which he was so much distinguished. His awkward motions—his convulsive starts—his habit of muttering to himself—his purblindness—his panting articulation—his uncouth figure—were all calculated to impress the beholder with the sense of his being an uncivilized person, but would all have been easily forgotten had they only covered the essentials of politeness, and not been the crust of manners essentially unrefined. Of those personal peculiarities Miss Burney has preserved a very lively representation:

"He is, indeed, very ill-favoured! Yet he has naturally a noble figure: tall, stout, grand, and authoritative; but he stoops horribly; his back is quite round; his mouth is continually opening and shutting, as if he were chewing something; he has a singular method of twirling his fingers and twisting his hands; his vast body is in constant agitation, see-sawing backwards

and forwards; his feet are never a moment quiet; and his whole great person looked often as if it were going to roll itself, quite voluntarily, from his chair to the floor.

"Since such is his appearance to a person so prejudiced in his favour as I am, how I must more than ever reverence his abilities, when I tell you that, upon asking my father why he had not prepared us for such uncouth, untoward strangeness, he laughed heartily, and said he had entirely forgotten that the same impression had been, at first, made upon himself, but had been lost even on the second interview ———

"How I long to see him again, to lose it, too!—for, knowing the value of what would come out when he spoke, he ceased to observe the defects that were out while he was silent.

"But you always charge me to write without reserve or reservation, and so I obey as usual. Else I should be ashamed to acknowledge having remarked such exterior blemishes in so exalted a character. His dress, considering the times, and that he had meant to put on all his *best becomes*, for he was engaged to dine with a very fine party at Mrs. Montagu's, was as much out of the common road as his figure. He had a large, full, bushy wig, a snuff-colour coat, with gold buttons, (or, peradventure, brass,) but no ruffles to his doughty fists; and not, I suppose, to be taken for a Blue, though going to the Blue Queen, he had on very coarse black worsted stockings."*

They, however, who only saw this distinguished person once or twice in society, were apt to form a very erroneous estimate of his temper, which was not

* It is truly painful to say, what is the real truth, that so excellent a writer as this lady once was, should have ended by being the very worst, without any single exception, of all writers whose name ever survived themselves. Such vile passages as this are in every page of her late works, and are surpassed by others—"A sweetness of mental attraction that magnetized longer from infirmity and deterioration of intellect from decay of years." (II., 44.) Such outrages are all but breaches of decorum.

at all morose or sullen, but rather kindly and sociable. He loved relaxation; he enjoyed merriment; he even liked to indulge in sportive and playful pleasantry, when his animal spirits were gay—pleasantry, indeed, somewhat lumbering, but agreeable, from its perfect heartiness. Nothing can be more droll than the scene of this kind of which Mr. Boswell has preserved the account, and into the humour of which he seems to have been incapable of entering. When some one was mentioned as having come to Mr. (afterwards Sir Wm.) Chambers, to draw his will, giving his estate to Sisters, Johnson objected, as it had not been gained by trade; "'If it had,' said he, 'he might have left it to the dog Towser, and let him keep his own name.'" He then went on "laughing immoderately at the *testator* as he kept calling him. 'I dare say,' said he, 'he thinks he has done a mighty thing; he won't wait till he gets home to his seat—he'll call up the landlord of the first inn on the road, and, after a suitable preface on mortality and the uncertainty of life, will tell him that he should not delay making his will; 'and here, Sir,' will he say, 'is my will, which I have just made, with the assistance of one of the ablest lawyers in the kingdom,' and he will read it to him, (laughing all the time.) He believes he has made this will; but he did not make it: you, Chambers, made it for him. I trust you have had more conscience than to make him say 'being of sound understanding'—ha! ha! ha! I hope he has left me a legacy. I'd have his will turned into verse, like a ballad.' Mr. Chambers," says Boswell, "didn't by any means relish this jocularity, upon a matter of which *pars magna fuit*, and seemed impatient till he got rid of us. Johnson couldn't stop his merriment, but continued it all the way, till he got without the Temple gate; he then burst into such a fit of laughter, that he appeared to be almost in a convulsion, and, in order to support himself, laid hold of one of the posts on the side of the

foot pavement, and sent forth peals so loud that, in the silence of the night, his voice seemed to resound from Temple Bar to Fleet Ditch." (II., 270.)

His laugh is described as being peculiarly hearty, though like a good humoured growl; and one drolly enough said, "he laughs like a rhinoceros." He was, when in good spirits, ever ready for idleness, and even frolic; and his friend has recorded an amusing anecdote of himself and Messrs. Beauclerk and Langton, once rousing him at three in the morning after dining in a tavern, when he cheerfully got up and said they must "make a day of it." So forth they sallied, played such pranks in Covent Garden Market as boys broke loose from school might indulge in, and ended by going down the river and dining at Greenwich.

His love of children may be added to the account of his good humour and his kindness. This has indeed been observed as often accompanying the melancholic temperament, as if their innocence and defencelessness were a relief and repose to the agitated mind. The same love of children was observed in Sir Isaac Newton, and it was an accompaniment of the case of which I have already given the outlines. Johnson also liked the society of persons younger than himself; and to the last had nothing of the severeness, querulousness, and discontent with the world, which the old are often seen to show. Indeed at all times of his life he liked to view things rather on their light side, at least in discussion; and he was a decided enemy to the principles of those who superciliously look down upon vulgar enjoyments, or ascetically condemn the innocent recreations of sense. Though he never at any period of his life, except during his intimacy with Savage, was intemperate, (for his often drinking alone as he said "to get rid of himself," must be regarded only as a desperate remedy attempted for an incurable disease,) yet he loved at all times to indulge in the pleasures of the table, and was exceedingly fond of

good eating, even while for some years he gave up the use of wine. It was a saying of his in discussing the merits of an entertainment at which he had been a guest, "Sir, it was not a dinner to ask a man to." With the breakfasts in Scotland he expressed his entire satisfaction: and in his 'Journey,' he says that if he could "transport himself by wish, he should, wherever he might be to dine, always breakfast in Scotland."

All these, however, are trifling matters, only made important by the extraordinary care taken to record every particular respecting his habits, as well as his more important qualities.

He was friendly, and actively so, in the greatest degree; he was charitable even beyond what prudential considerations might justify; as firmly as he believed the Gospel, so constantly did he practise its divine maxim, "that it is more blessed to give than to receive." His sense of justice was strict and constant; his love of truth was steady and unbroken, in all matters as well little as great; nor did any man ever more peremptorily deny the existence of what are sometimes so incorrectly termed white lies; for he justly thought that when a habit of being careless of the truth in trifling things once has been formed, it will become easily, nay, certainly, applicable to things of moment. His habitual piety, his sense of his own imperfections, his generally blameless conduct in the various relations of life, has been already sufficiently described, and has been illustrated in the preceding narrative. He was a good man, as he was a great man; and he had so firm a regard for virtue that he wisely set much greater store by his worth than by his fame.*

* The edition of Boswell by my able and learned friend Mr. Croker, is a valuable accession to literature, and the well known accuracy of that gentleman gives importance to his labours. I have mentioned one instance of his having been misled by the narrrative of Sir Walter Scott from neither having attended to the dates.—*Supra*, p. 354.

GIBBON.

THE biography of illustrious men, men whose history is intimately connected either with the political events of their times, or with the progress of science or of learning, has ever been deemed one of the most useful as well as delightful departments of literature; nor does it yield to any in the capacity of conveying the most important instruction in every department of knowledge. It has accordingly been cultivated in all ages by the most eminent men. Invaluable contributions to it have been afforded by the individuals themselves whose lives were to be recorded. Their correspondence with familiar friends is one source of our knowledge regarding them; nay, it may almost be termed a branch of autobiography. Who does not value Cicero's letters above most of his works? Who does not lament that those of Demosthenes are not more numerous and better authenticated? But some have been in form as well as in substance their own biographers. Nor does any one accuse Hume and Gibbon of an undue regard to their own fame, or of assuming arrogantly a rank above their real importance, when they left us the precious histories of their lives. On the contrary, their accounts of other men contain few pages more valuable to the cause of truth than those which they have left of their own studies. "Ac plerique suam ipsi vitam narrare, fiduciam potius morum quam arrogantiam arbitrati sunt: nec id Rutilio et Scauro citra fidem aut obtrectationi fuit. Adeo virtutes iisdem temporibus optime æstimantur quibus facillimè gignuntur." (Tacit. 'Vit. Ag.' cap. i.)

Guided in part by the light of his own description, in part by that which his correspondence sheds, we have traced the history of one of these great historians. We are now to follow that of the other with similar advantages from the lights of his own pen.

Edward Gibbon was descended from a considerable and ancient family settled in the county of Kent, and landowners there as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century. Their respectability may be judged from the circumstance that in Edward III.'s reign John Gibbon, the head of the house, was king's architect, and received the grant of a hereditary toll in Stonar Passage, as a reward for the construction of Queenborough Castle. One of the family, in Henry the Sixth's reign, married Fiennes, Lord Say and Sele, the Lord High Treasurer; and from him the historian descended in the eleventh generation, belonging to a younger branch of the Gibbons which settled in London in the reign of James I., and engaged in commerce. His grandfather acquired in these pursuits considerable wealth, and was at the end of Queen Anne's reign commissioner of the customs, together with Prior the poet. His family had always been of the Tory party, and his promotion came from the Queen's Tory Ministry. In 1716 he became a director of the South Sea Company, and he was proved to have then been possessed of above a hundred thousand pounds, all of which he lost, except a pittance granted by the authors of the violent proceedings that confiscated the estates of the directors; one of the most flagrant acts of injustice, and ex post facto legislation, of which history affords any record. All were compelled to disclose their property; exorbitant security for their appearance was exacted; they were restrained from making any mortgage or transfer or exchange. They prayed to be heard against the bill; this prayer was refused; three-and-thirty persons were condemned, absent and unheard; the pittance allotted to each was

made the subject of unfeeling jest; motions to give one a pound, another a shilling, were made; the most absurd tales were told, and eagerly believed, resting on no kind of proof, and on these the votes of the House of Commons were passed. The outrages of despots in barbarous countries and dark ages seldom can go beyond this parliamentary proceeding of a popular legislature in a civilized community and an enlightened age, the country of Locke, Newton, Somers, and while yet their immortal names shed a lustre on the eighteenth century of the Christian era. Nor is it possible to contemplate this legislative enormity without reflecting on the infirm title of the very lawgivers who perpetrated it. The act was one passed in 1720 by the first septennial Parliament during the four years which it had added to its lawful existence, having been chosen in 1715 for only three years, and extended its existence to seven. It is a creditable thing to the historian that, believing the Protestant succession to have been saved (as it certainly was) by that measure, he always gave his vote against its repeal. Nor was the spirit of the people more inclined to justice than that of their unchosen representatives. Whatever may have been the unpopularity of the original Septennial Act in those Jacobite times, the violence done to the South Sea Directors was amply justified by the public voice. Complaints were indeed made, and loudly; but it was of the mercy shown to those whom the fury of disappointed speculators called "monsters," "traitors," "the cannibals of Change Alley." Their blood was called for in a thousand quarters; and the shame of the Parliament was loudly proclaimed to be, that no one had been hanged for the crime of having engaged in an unsuccessful adventure. So regardless of all reason and justice, and evèn common sense, is the accursed thirst of gold that raises the dæmon of commercial gambling!

When Mr. Gibbon's fortune, amounting to £106,000,

was confiscated, two sums being proposed as his allowance, fifteen thousand and ten thousand, the smaller was immediately adopted; but his life being prolonged for sixteen years, his industry was so fruitful that he left nearly as large a fortune as the violence of Parliament had robbed him of. Dying in 1736, he left his son, the historian's father and two daughters, one of whom married Mr. Elliott of Cornwall, afterwards Lord Elliott. The celebrated author of the 'Serious Call,' William Law, lived as tutor in the family, and is supposed to have designed the son by the name of Flatus in that popular work. A lady of the family still settled in Kent, married Mr. Yorke Gibbon, the father of Lord Hardwick; and by another, the historian was related to the Actons, who afterwards settled in Naples.

The estates left by the Director were situate at Putney in Surrey, and in Hampshire, near Petersfield, in which he possessed so large an influence that his son represented it in Parliament. Edward, the historian, was born at Putney, April 27, 1737, his mother being a daughter of Mr. Porten, a merchant in London, who lived near the church of that village. Mr. Gibbon afterwards sat for Southampton, and continued in Parliament until 1747. Edward's infancy was exceedingly delicate, and his life with difficulty preserved. He was treated with unceasing care by his maternal aunt, Mrs. Catherine Porten; and it was not easy to teach him reading, writing, and accounts, though quick enough of capacity. At seven years of age he was placed under John Kirkby, a poor Cumberland curate, as private tutor, and author of some popular works; and two years after, he was sent to a private academy, kept by a Dr. Wooddeson, at Kingston. Next year his mother died, and soon after her father became bankrupt; so that his kind aunt was driven from Putney to keep a boarding-house at Westminster School, and his father, inconsolable for his

wife's death, left Surrey to bury himself in his Hampshire property. Mrs. Porten took her sickly nephew with her to Westminster, where, in the course of two years, he "painfully ascended into the third form." But his health continued so feeble, that it became necessary to remove him, and he was consigned to the care of a female servant at Bath. As his sixteenth year approached he became much more robust, and he was placed under Mr. Francis, Sir Philip's father, who then taught at Esher in Surrey. Soon, however, his relations found that the ill-principled tutor preferred the pleasures of London to the duties of his school; and they removed his pupil to Oxford, where he was entered as a gentleman-commoner of Magdalen College, 2nd April, 1752, a few weeks before he had completed his fifteenth year.

Hitherto it may truly be said, that, partly from his feeble health, partly from the neglect of his instructors, he had been taught little, and left to acquire information either by his own efforts or from the conversation of his excellent aunt. Fortunately she was a well-read person, of sound judgment, and correct taste; and she delighted to direct, and to form his mind by pointing out the best books, and helping him to understand them. His reading, however, was necessarily desultory, and in the classics he made but an inconsiderable progress, although he had acquired a competent knowledge of the Latin tongue. But the bent of his inclination had already disclosed itself. While he read other books, he devoured histories. The 'Universal History' was then in the course of publication, and he eagerly pored over the volumes as they successively appeared. In the summer of 1751, he accompanied his father on a visit to Mr. Hoare, in Wiltshire, and finding in the library the continuation of Echard's 'Roman History,' he was deeply immersed in it when summoned to dinner. Returning to Bath, he obtained that portion of Howell's 'History of the

World,' containing the Byzantine period; and he soon had traversed the whole field of oriental story—nay, more, he had studied the geography connected with that history, and had examined the different chronological systems which bore upon the subject; those of Scaliger, and Petavius, of Marsham, and Newton; which of course he could only know at second-hand; and he arrived at Oxford before the age of fifteen complete, with a stock of erudition, which he says, might have puzzled a Doctor, and a degree of ignorance, of which, he ingenuously confesses, a schoolboy would have been ashamed.

Being entered a gentleman-commoner of his College, he at once from a boy was transformed into a man, in so far as regarded the persons with whom he associated, the respect with which he was treated, and the independence which he enjoyed. The picture which he has left us of the studies at that time pursued, the discipline of the place, and the assiduity of the teachers, is very far indeed from flattering. The account given by Adam Smith, and which has been the subject of so much ignorant, so much prejudiced, and, I fear we must add, so much interested vituperation, is more than fully borne out by Gibbon's testimony. Under Dr. Waldegrave, his first tutor, he learnt little; but he delighted in that reverend person's conversation. Under the successor, whose name is charitably withheld, he learnt nothing; paying the salary and only receiving a single lesson. The sum of his obligations to the University is stated to be the reading, without any commentary or explanation, three or four plays of Terence in fourteen months of academical *study*. Meanwhile his habits became irregular and expensive, and no effort whatever was made to prevent him from falling into idle and even vicious courses, or to reclaim him after he had gone astray. No care was given to his religious instruction; and as he always had a turn for controversial discussion, he

soon fell, thus abandoned, into a snare too often spread for neglected youth, too easily effectual to their ruin. The study of Middleton's 'Free Inquiry,' made him confound the Protestant with the Popish dogmas; and, induced by Mr. Molesworth, a friend who had embraced Romanism, he, after a short interval of hesitation, embraced the principles, and bowed to the authority of an infallible church. He became reconciled to Rome, could not again return to the orthodox, but Protestant shades of Magdalen, and was sent to Lausanne by his father; after an ill-judged attempt to reclaim him, by placing him under the superintendence of Mallet, the poet, who with his wife had thrown off all Christianity, perhaps even all religion whatever.

In contemplating the account given both by Smith and Gibbon, of the great University, in which both resided without being instructed, the friend of education feels it gratifying to reflect that the picture which both have left, and the latter especially, finds no resemblance in the Alma Mater of the Hollands, the Cannings, the Carlisles, the Wards, the Peels. The shades of Oxford under the Jacksons, the Wetherells, the Coplestones, (friendly, learned, honoured names, which I delight to bring into contrast with the neglectful tutors of Gibbon,) bears no more resemblance to that illustrious seat of learning in his time, than the Cambridge of the Aireys, the Herschells, the Whewells, the Peacocks, the Gaskins, offers to the Cambridge in which Playfair might afterwards, with justice, lament, that the *Mécanique Céleste* could no longer find readers in the haunts where Newton had once taught, and where his name only was since known.

At Lausanne Gibbon was placed under the care of M. Pavilliard, a pious and well-informed Calvinist minister, who, by gentle and rational discipline, brought him back to the Protestant faith, of which he testified his deliberate approval by receiving the Sacra-

ment, Christmas, 1754. M. Pavilliard also successfully guided his studies during five of the most important years of his life. In the Latin Classics he made a great and easy progress; he began the study of the Greek; he learned the outlines of general knowledge, and as much of natural science as he ever had any taste or capacity to master. His active mind had even entered into speculations connected with literary subjects; and he corresponded with Crevier, Gesner, and other men of letters, on points connected with the higher departments of classical learning. French literature occupied naturally a considerable share of his attention in a country where that language alone was spoken, and where Voltaire resided. At the private theatre of the patriarch he was a frequent attendant, and heard the poet declaim his own fine verse; but he confesses that he was never distinguished in the number of the admirers who crowded those assemblies, or in the more select circle which frequented the hospitable table of the great poet.

Beside his study of the Classics and of the French authors, he exercised himself in composition, and acquired great facility both in writing English and French, and even Latin, by translating and retranslating from the three languages. But the chief portion of his time was devoted to a careful perusal of the great Latin authors, all of whom he most diligently examined with the aid of their commentators, and all of whom he abstracted generally in his journal. After carefully going through Cicero's whole works with the variorum notes of Verburgius's folio edition, he completed the other and more laborious branch of this extensive plan during the last twenty-seven months of his residence at Lausanne. There is hardly upon record so diligent a preparation for literary exertion; and be it observed, that though he had now attained and passed his twenty-first year with habits of study well fitted to excite emulation and urge the boldness

of youth into attempts at obtaining literary fame, or at least into experimental trials of his strength, he passed all the time of his studious residence at Lausanne without any effort of composition, and never seems to have thought of becoming an author after the boyish essay on the Age of Socrates, which he had made during his first Oxford vacation, and which he afterwards committed to the flames.

It was during this period of his life, alike happy and useful, that he became, or dreamt he became, enamoured of Mlle. Curchod, daughter of a venerable pastor. She returned his flame; but on his father very peremptorily "forbidding the banns," alarmed it should seem quite as much with this Calvinistic as he had before been with the Romish conversion, the dutiful son broke off the connexion in a letter, which ended with, "C'est pour quoi, Mlle., J'ai l'honneur d'être votre très-humble et très-obéissant serviteur, E. G.;"* and which forms one of the reasons why I have expressed some doubt of his really having felt the heat of the tender passion. The story is often told of his bodily weakness having, when on the floor at her feet, prevented him from rising, and his bodily weight kept her from assisting him, so that the bell was resorted to, in order that extraneous help might be procured in the dilemma. Be this as it may, the lady was reserved for a higher destiny. She became the wife of Necker, soon after the first minister of France; and no preceding circumstance ever prevented her first admirer from continuing to be her respected and intimate friend in her exaltation.

But he formed another friendship at Lausanne, which proved much more important to his happiness through life. He became intimately acquainted, from similarity of age, disposition, and pursuits, with M. Deyverdun, a young man of respectable family, amiable character,

* This curious particular is not given by himself, but by his friend M. Sumd.—('Mémoire.')

and good education. Their correspondence continued ever after to be familiar and pleasing; and the loss of his society was the principal, if not the only regret which Gibbon felt when his return to England took place.

This happened in May, 1758, by the consent of his father, who received him with perfect kindness, unabated by the second marriage which he had recently contracted. His stepmother was a woman of amiable character and of excellent sense; and a lasting friendship appears to have subsisted between them during her whole life. His kind aunt, however, Mrs. Porten, was naturally the first object of his affections, and to her he hastened upon his arrival. The principal evil which attended his long exile was, that at the important age when accidental circumstances are so plastic in forming the habits, he had ceased to be an Englishman. He wrote, spoke, and thought in a foreign language; and as his allowance was too moderate to suffer any expense not absolutely necessary, he never had associated with his countrymen who passed through or sojourned in Switzerland. On his return home, therefore, he found himself as a stranger in a far country; and as his father, now residing chiefly at Buriton in Hampshire, had long given up all connexion with London society, the son seems, during the nine months that he passed there of the first two years after his arrival, to have been only intimate with the Mallets and with Lady Harvey, (the present Lord Bristol's grandmother,) to whom they had introduced him. At Buriton, too, he enjoyed the pleasures of a large library; he resumed his classical studies; he read, he abridged, and he commented; finally he turned his thoughts towards composition. Mallet advised him to study Swift and Addison; he studied them and he admired, but he ran counter in every one particular to their example; and in 1761 he published his essay 'Sur l'Etude de la

Littérature,' the work of about six weeks nearly two years before, but withheld from the press through dread of its failure.

Though no one can deny that this work shows both extensive reading and a habit of thinking, and though it is the production unquestionably of a clever man, yet must we admit it to be in some most essential particulars singularly defective, and, in some respects, rather a puerile performance. The cardinal fault is the want of any definite object. Who can tell what the author would be at, if it be not to display his reading, his epigrammatic talent, and his facility in writing French? It is said, in the address to the reader, that the author's design was to "vindicate a favourite study, and rescue it from the contempt under which it was languishing." But what is the favourite study? Literature means the whole of learning in one sense; and, in a more restricted acceptation, it means learning apart from science. But what occasion to vindicate learning? Who accused, who contemned it, at least in the middle of the eighteenth century? The vindicator came five or six hundred years too late to the defence. The champion hastened to the *rescue* long after the fight was over, and was won. His ancient reading might have reminded him of things out of time and things out of place. Learning might be figured addressing him with thanks, and, also, in her turn, vindicating him from the charge of not knowing his alphabet, as Tiberius condoled with some tardy addressers from Troy, on the occasion of his son's death by condoling with them on the loss of their distinguished countryman Hector. A bystander might have applied to his panegyric on Letters the question put to the eulogist of Hercules.

Gibbon, himself, seems fully aware of the radical defect in his work, that he applies the term "literature" loosely and variously, instead of giving it a definite sense. If classical learning be the principal

subject of his remarks, it is equally certain that he sets out with resting the glory of man upon his achievements in the sciences, and soon declares his regret that mathematics and physics should have in modern times thrown the sister branches of philosophy into the shade. His observations, too, are scattered over the whole range of knowledge, and not always confined to the knowledge of the ancients. But suppose they were? Who can draw the line between ancient and modern, or suppose that the study of the poets, the orators, the historians, the philosophers of antiquity, can be different from the general study of poetry, rhetoric, history, and philosophy? He is himself quite conscious of the total want of arrangement that pervades his work. "A number," he says, "of remarks and examples, historical, critical, philosophical, are heaped on each other without method or connexion, and, if we except some introductory pages, all the remaining chapters might indifferently be reversed or transposed." ('Life,' chap. v.) Though his candour be deserving of our approval, and though we must also agree in his observation that "the imitation of Montesquieu has been fatal," there is little chance of any one subscribing to the complacency with which he regards his obstinate defence of the early history of Rome. Assuredly nothing can be less creditable to his sagacity; nor can one so difficult on other subjects of belief be excused for so easily swallowing down the poetical fictions of the earlier Roman annals.

The folly of choosing to write in a foreign language he hardly excuses by saying, that it was partly with a view of furthering the plan of his father to obtain some diplomatic appointment, but chiefly from the vanity of being a singular instance in this kind. The success, however, of the publication abroad was aided by this circumstance, but it was not sufficiently great to justify the author; while at home the work could

not be said to have any success at all. It was little read beyond the circle of the writer's few friends, and it was very speedily forgotten.

A short time before this publication, June, 1759, he had joined the Hampshire militia as captain, his father having the rank of major. During two years and a half, that is, till the end of the war, he was thus condemned, he says, "to a wandering life of military servitude." He complains of the loss of precious time thus occasioned, and the souring of the temper by ruder intercourse without any adequate compensation for either evil, beyond the restoring him to English habits and rubbing away the foreign rust of his Swiss education. It is singular enough that, at the close of this long and thankless interruption, on his resuming his studious habits, he hesitated between Greek and Mathematics, when a letter of Mr. Scott (whom I have mentioned in the life of his teacher Simson) traced to him a map of the country, which seems to have appeared too rocky and arid for his taste. He now, therefore, applied himself to Greek, which he had hitherto almost entirely neglected, having only as yet formed an acquaintance with the monuments of the Attic and the Doric genius through the medium of general descriptions, or through the imperfect reflexion of translations, that preserve not all of the substance and nothing whatever of the diction. His characteristic industry soon accomplished the task of introducing him to the father of poetry; whose immortal song Scaliger had read through in twenty-one days, but with Gibbon's more imperfect knowledge of the Homeric language its perusal occupied as many weeks. He read almost the whole of the Iliad twice in the same year, beside some books of the Odyssey and Longinus's treatise. The other books which he read at the same time were more or less connected with Greek learning.

During the time spent in the militia, he had frequently

revolved in his mind the plan of some historical work, and had successively chosen as his subjects, the Expedition of Charles VIII. into Italy, respecting which he went so far as to discuss at large that Prince's title to the crown of Naples, contrasted with the rival claims of the Houses of Anjou and Aragon—the wars of the English Barons—the lives of the Black Prince, of Sir Philip Sidney, and of Montrose; but he at length fixed on Raleigh, and read with diligence all the works which treat of that remarkable person. After much preparatory labour, he abandoned the design, and thought of the Swiss Confederacy, and of Florence under the Medicis; but before he finally settled to either subject, he went abroad for two years and a half, passing three or four months at Paris, in the most interesting society, and nearly a year at Lausanne, before he crossed the Alps—

"Filled with the visions of fair Italy."

For this important expedition he prepared himself with all his wonted industry. He diligently studied the greater classics; he examined all that the best writers had collected on the topography of Ancient Rome, on Italian geography, and on Medals, going carefully through Nardini, Donatus, Spanheim, D'Anville, Beaufort, Cluverius, and other modern writers, as well as Strabo, Pliny, and Pomponius Mela, and he filled a large common-place book with notes and extracts, as well as disquisitions on important passages of Roman antiquities and history. Thus furnished perhaps better than any other traveller ever was for his expedition, he fared forth in the spring of 1764—

"To happy convents, bosomed deep in vines,
Where slumber Abbots purple as their wines;
To isles of fragrance, lily-silvered vales,
Diffusing languor on the panting gales;
To lands of singing or of dancing slaves—
Love-whispering woods, and lute-resounding waves;
But chief her court where naked Venus keeps,
And Cupids ride the Lion of the deeps."—*Dunciad.*

The greater number of the Italian cities he visited, but it was in Rome that he made the longest stay, remaining there between four and five months of the eleven which he passed beyond the Alps. It was also at Rome that he formed the plan of writing his great work. The idea entered his mind while, "on the 15th of October, he sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter," ('Life,' chap. vi.,)—a striking picture surely, and one in which the image of the Roman Decline and Fall appears to be shadowed forth with sufficient distinctness. To the original idea, indeed, it was still more akin: for he at first only contemplated a History of the Eternal City's decay.

His second visit to Lausanne had given him the important accession to his comfort of Lord Sheffield's acquaintance, then Mr. Holroyd, who accompanied him into Italy, and proved ever after his most intimate and confidential friend. He was a person of cultivated mind, but filled more with details than with principles, and those details relating to statistics and commercial facts, rather than to the more classical pursuits of Gibbon. His opinions were framed on a contracted scale, and on the matters presented by the old and unphilosophical school. He had no genius in his views, no point or spirit in his composition; he frequently, however, addressed his moderate number of readers through the press, each commercial question, as it were, producing a work of accurate detail, of narrow views, of inconsistent reasoning, and of unreadable dryness. But his life of bad pamphlets was varied by a gallant resistance, which he made at the head of his Yeomanry Cavalry, to the No-Popery mob of 1780, and he also had the good taste to cultivate the society of abler and more lettered men, in consequence probably of his intimacy with Gibbon, who, during the twenty years of his life passed in England after his return from Italy, was domesticated in the Holroyd family. He was re-

turned to Parliament by Bristol, after Burke's opposition to the American war had caused his rejection by that city; and having married one of Lord North's amiable and gifted daughters, he supported the measures of that able, though unfortunate statesman, and was by him raised to the Irish peerage. Whatever may have been his deficiencies as a political writer, in his personal and domestic character he was blameless; and the constancy of his attachment to his celebrated friend was a source of comfort and of credit to both.

On his return in June, 1765, Gibbon resumed the domestic relations which his travels had only interrupted, and found great satisfaction in the friendship of his own family, especially of his step-mother, an amiable, kindly, and sensible woman. His only real business, however, was the yearly attendance on his militia regiment, in which he rose successively to the rank of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant. But though this occupation only lasted a month, he found it became intolerable, and in 1770 resigned his commission. He describes these five years between his return and his father's death, which happened soon after his resignation as the most irksome of his life. And the void which he felt from want of regular and professional employment, he has described in such a way, that the record thus left ought for ever to deter men from embracing a merely literary life, whose circumstances are not such as to make its gains, its moderate and precarious gains, a matter of necessary consideration. He enjoyed fully the ease of comfortable, though not of luxurious, or even affluent circumstances; he had a cheerful home, and if without the interest, was also free from the cares of a family; his time was at his own command; and he lived in a library while at Buriton, and in the best society when in London. Yet listen to his moan over the want of that sovereign authority which a social position exercises, but so as to make its service perfect freedom

compared with the slavery of nullity and *ennui*: "While so many of my acquaintance were married, or in Parliament, or advancing with a rapid step in the various roads of honour and fortune, I stood alone immovable and insignificant."—"I lamented that at the proper age I had not embraced the lucrative pursuits of the law or trade, the chances of civil office or India adventure, or even the fat slumbers of the Church; and my repentance became more lively as the loss of time was more irretrievable. Experience showed me the use of grafting my private consequence on the importance of a great professional body; the benefits of these form connexions which are cemented by hope and interest, by gratitude and emulation, by the mutual exchange of services and favour." ('Life,' chap. viii.) Then were not the occupations of his studious hours, and especially of his projected works, enough to fill up his time and satisfy his mind? We saw him but lately seated on the Capitol, *multa et præclara minantem*. Had all these plans vanished without producing any fruit? Not so; he had, in the society of his earliest and most cherished friend Deyverdun, who by yearly visits served to break the monotony of his superabundant leisure, commenced more literary works than one. The History of Switzerland was chosen for one subject; and the two friends made considerable preparation for its composition by collecting materials, which, when in German, were diligently translated by Deyverdun for the use of Gibbon, to whom the composition was in 1767 consigned. He produced the first book of the History; it was submitted to the judgment of a society of literary foreigners; the author, unknown to them, was present; he heard their sentence of condemnation with pain, but confirmed it in his cooler moments. It was, however, afterwards submitted to a better judge; Mr. Hume approved of it in all respects but the foreign language employed, and strongly recommended a continuation of the work. Gibbon himself, however, sided

with the court below, and says in his 'Life' that he committed the manuscript to the flames. This he neglected to do; and though Lord Sheffield in a note has expressed an opinion coinciding with Hume's, he is thought to have destroyed it, possibly from respect for his friend's declared intentions.*

Another work was planned and partly executed during the same period. Gibbon and Deyverdun published in the two years 1767 and 1768 an annual review, entitled 'Mémoires Littéraires de la Grande Bretagne.' To the first volume Gibbon contributed, among other papers, an excellent review of Lyttleton's 'History of Henry II.,' at once acute, candid, and judicious. The second was adorned with an article on 'Walpole's Historical Doubts,' from the pen of Mr. Hume. The dedication to Lord Chesterfield obtained for Deyverdun the appointment of tutor to his successor, the late Earl; and when a third volume was nearly ready for publication he went abroad with the care of Sir Richard Worsley, and did not return till after the death of Gibbon's father.

A third work also bears date in the same period of listlessness and discontent. It was an answer to Warburton's dream respecting the Sixth Book of the Æneid; and though tinged with a bitterness of spirit to which no anonymous writer should give way, all competent judges have admitted the victory over insolent and dogmatic paradox to have been complete. This was his first publication in his native tongue, and, except his contributions to the periodical work, it was his only appearance through the press during the fifteen years that had elapsed since his Essay came out.

Thus there was no want of either study or literary labour to diversify the learned leisure which yet he found so irksome. The contrast is surpassingly remarkable, which his description presents to the account

* Some believe that it is still among the Gibbon papers, the publication of which Lord Sheffield, by his will, positively prohibited.

which D'Alembert has left us, of the calm pleasure enjoyed by him as long as he confined himself to geometrical pursuits. Shall we ascribe this diversity to the variety of individual character and tastes; or to the difference in the nature of those literary occupations; or finally to the peculiarities of French society, affording, as it does, daily occupation too easy to weary, and pleasing relaxation too temperate to cloy? Perhaps partly to each of the three causes, but most of all to the absorbing nature of the geometrician's studies. It seems certain, however, that no life of mere literary indulgence, of study unmingled with exertion, and with continued, regular exertion, can ever be passed in tolerable contentment; and that if the student has not a regular, and, as it were, a professional occupation to fill up the bulk of his time, he must make to himself the only substitute for it by engaging in some long and laborious work. Gibbon found by experience the necessity of some such resource; and we owe to his sense of it, the 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.'

The preparations for this great work were made with deliberate care; but the composition was deferred for several years, by the anxieties which his father's declining circumstances as well as health occasioned. After many vain efforts to mend his fortune by loans, and by parting with the residence at Putney, all of which means were generously seconded by the son, he died in 1770, partly from mental suffering; and it was not till two years had elapsed, that the heir of a fortune, now become moderate, could finally close the farming concerns of the family and transfer his residence from Hampshire to London. At length, in 1772, he began the work, and so little did he find it easy to "hit the middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation," that the first chapter was thrice, and the two following ones were twice composed, before he could be satisfied with the effect. Possibly

had he given the same careful revision to the subsequent chapters we should have seen a style more chastened; and if his very defective taste in composition had retained the weeds which he took for flowers, at least such confused metaphors would have been extirpated, as "the aspect of Greek emperors towards the Pope being the thermometer of their prosperity, and the scale of their dynasty," (ch. lxvi.)—and "a ray of light proceeding from the darkness of the tenth century;" and such enigmatical wrapping up of his meaning, as "the kindred appellation of Scævola being illustrated by three sages of the law." (ch. xliv.) Certain it is that the three first chapters are beyond all comparison the most chastely composed of the whole seventy-one.

After three years bestowed upon this work, the appearance of which was somewhat delayed by his being in 1774 returned to Parliament for his cousin Mr. Elliott's borough of Liskeard, the first volume, in quarto, was published in the month of February, 1776. Its success was complete. The praise of Mr. Strahan, which Lord Sheffield greatly values, is not indeed of the most enlightened cast. He extols the diction as "the most correct, most elegant, and most expressive he ever read." But the opinion of the two great historians of the age was more judicious, and it was very favourable. Dr. Robertson, while he objected to some passages as too laboured, and to others as too quaint, praised the general flow of the language, and the peculiar happiness of many expressions; and having read the work with a constant reference to the original authorities, he commends his accuracy, as he does his great industry. He likewise bestows praise on the narrative as perspicuous and interesting; and he terms the style generally elegant and forcible. Of the two last chapters, the fifteenth and sixteenth, he merely says he has not yet read them, but from what he has heard, expects they will give great offence and injure

the success of the book. Mr. Hume still more lavishly extols the work; and of the style he commends the dignity, without taking the exceptions which his own very superior taste must have suggested. Of the two last chapters, he says that the author has extricated himself as well as he could by observing a very prudent temperament; he warns him, however, of the clamour which was sure to arise upon them, and gives a very dismal prediction of the downfall of philosophy, and decrease of taste, which the prevalence of superstition in England was likely to bring about. He also expresses his astonishment that a classical work should have appeared in a country so given up to "barbarous and absurd faction, and so totally neglecting all polite letters." The reception of his own history in all likelihood was present to his memory when he took these gloomy views. He urges Gibbon to continue the work, which he says the learned men of Edinburgh are most anxious to see completed, and mournfully observes, that he speaks without any personal interest, as he cannot expect to see the fulfilment of these wishes. In fact he died a few months after the date of the letter, (March, 1776.)*

* My learned, able and reverend friend, Mr. Milman, (to whose admirable edition alone I refer in this work,) departing from his wonted and very signal candour, adds a note to the Principal's letter intimating that "his prudential civility is not quite honest," in reference to the passage regarded by Mr. M. as a suppressed opinion on the celebrated chapters. My knowledge of Dr. Robertson's strict and most scrupulous veracity, makes it quite clear to me that the fact was as he stated it, and that to avoid controversy, (a thing he exceedingly disliked on all occasions, but especially on matters so interesting to his feelings as the truths of Christianity,) he had purposely written his letter before he perused those portions of the volume. Surely he might be excused for not expressing his dissent from or disapproval of the chapters, when it was notorious to all mankind that he had himself discussed the same subject, but with the views of a sincere believer, in the famous Sermon so often referred to by M. Guizot, in his Notes, as containing an anticipated refutation of Gibbon,—notes inserted by Mr. Milman himself in his edition of the History. It might as well be supposed that Mr. Hume differed with Gibbon, because he does not express any concurrence or any approval, except of the prudence of the manner, as that Dr. Robertson agreed with him, or did not disapprove

The public voice amply confirmed these important and learned judgments. The first edition of a thousand was exhausted in a few days; two others scarcely supplied the demand; and the Dublin pirates twice invaded the copyright. The volume, moreover, was to be seen, not only in the studies of the learned, but in the drawing-rooms of the idle and the gay. On the other hand, the violence of theological controversy was speedily excited by the two chapters; and adversaries of various ranks in the Church, and of every degree of merit, hastened to the conflict, from Lord Hailes and Dr. Watson, afterwards Bishop of Llandaff, down to Mr. Chelsum, a feeble but violent divine, and Taylor, an Arian minister, Vicar of Portsmouth, and alike wrong-headed and enthusiastic. Gibbon admits that for a while the noise stunned him, but he soon found that his antagonists were, with a very few exceptions, far too little prepared for the combat, by the possession of any weapons save zeal, to occasion him any harm, and he resolved to maintain silence and leave his defence to time, and to the body of those readers who had studied his work. This reserve he continued until his veracity was attacked by the charge of false quotations, and then he published his 'Vindication.' Of that work the reverend editor of his Life and History well observes, that "this single discharge from the ponderous artillery of learning and sarcasm laid prostrate the whole disorderly squadron of rash and feeble volunteers who filled the ranks of his enemies, while the more distinguished theological writers of the country stood aloof." ('Life,' ch. ix., note 3.)

Two years elapsed between the publication of the first and the commencement of the second volume. His curiosity had induced him to attend courses of

the line which he had pursued. Both these great historians assumed that their opinions on the matter must be well known, and could not be mistaken by those their letters were addressed to, Mr. Hume's being written to Gibbon himself, and Dr. Robertson's to Mr. Strahan, the publisher of his celebrated Sermon.

lectures on anatomy under Dr. William Hunter, and on chemistry under Mr. Higgins; and he read some books of natural history. In 1771 he went to Paris, on the invitation of his friends the Neckers, who had come over to England on a visit, and this excursion occupied six months, which he passed very agreeably, if not very instructively, in the best Parisian society. He was there, from his knowledge of the language and his early habits of foreign residence, more at home than most other strangers who frequent those circles, and there remain testimonies of competent witnesses to his success. Mme. du Deffand describes it as very great indeed, praises his French, applauds also the fulness of his conversation, is pleased with his manners, though she complains that he is much too fond of distinction and overrates the pleasures of French society; she is in some doubt if he is a very clever man, though clear that he is a very learned one; and asserts, among other things, that though he has not the abilities (l'esprit)* of Mr. Hume, "il ne tombe pas dans les mêmes ridicules, mais se comporte d'une manière qui ne donne point de prise au ridicule, ce qui est fort difficile à éviter dans les sociétés qu'il fréquente." (Lett., 284.) Suard gives more credit to his talents, but charges him with being too prepared in his sentences, and too anxious to shine, while he allows his conversation to be full and animated. He likewise praises the facility and correctness of his French, though he spoke it with a very strong accent and with extremely unpleasant intonations of the voice.

His return to Parliament somewhat delayed the first volume, but the attendance of some stormy sessions does not appear to have at all interrupted the

* Hume's difficulty in speaking the language, and his awkward though simple and unaffected manners, were often the subject of merriment at Paris; but this very naïveté contributed to the reputation of "le bon David," as he was generally termed.

further progress of the work. And the all but sinecure place of a Lord of Trade, which he accepted in 1779, could have very little influence on the disposal of his time. This favour was opportunely bestowed on him as a recompense, not merely for his steady support in Parliament, but for his drawing up a defence for the British Government against the French claims in 1778; it was written at the request of the Ministers, particularly Lord Thurlow, then Chancellor, and was prepared in concert with the Foreign Office, from which the materials were furnished. The work is allowed to have been respectably executed; and the scurrilous attack upon it by Wilkes, generally set down to the account of factious spleen, had no success. In 1780 he lost his seat in Parliament, at the general election; and soon after published his second and third volumes, which, he confesses, were by no means so well received as the first had been. Lord North's friendship restored him to the House of Commons as member for Lymington, a seat which he retained until Mr. Pitt's dissolution to defeat the famous Coalition in 1784. The Board of Trade had been abolished some months before, and his income being no longer adequate to a comfortable residence in London, he resolved to pass the rest of his life at Lausanne.

After the publication of his second and third volumes, which bring down the History to the fall of the Western Empire at the beginning of the sixth century, he hesitated for some months whether to continue the work, or terminate it at that period. This interval was passed in classical studies, particularly of the Greek poets and historians, but with excursions into the writings of the Socratic school. But

> Medio de fonte leporum
> Surgit amari aliquid quod in ipsis floribus angat.

He found "in the luxury of freedom the wish for the

daily toil, the active pursuit which gave value to every work and an object to every inquiry;" and the same want of a regular occupation that had originally given rise to the work determined him to continue it. Before he left England he had nearly finished the fourth volume. He had also been urged by the importunate zeal of Dr. Priestley to enter into a controversy with him on the subject of his two chapters. That indiscreet and angry polemic sent him a copy of his work on the 'Corruptions of Christianity,' civilly intimating that it was intended not as a gift but as a challenge. Gibbon declined the invitation in a sneering letter, questioning whether he or his correspondent best deserved the name of unbeliever. Priestley replied, that Gibbon's honour as well as his principles called for a defence, inasmuch as he had covertly and not with honest openness assailed Christianity. Gibbon's rejoinder declined all further correspondence "with such an adversary." Priestley then stated that their correspondence not being confidential, he might possibly print it. Gibbon replied, that he alone had the right to authorize such a proceeding, and that he withheld his consent. Priestley, on the ground that the subject of their letters was public, asserted his right to print them; which he did soon after Gibbon's decease. The opinion of the world has long since been pronounced very unanimously, that though Gibbon's sneers were chargeable with impertinence, yet Priestley's whole proceeding was entirely without justification, and his reason for publishing the correspondence utterly absurd.

In the autumn of 1783 Gibbon repaired to Lausanne, where his friend Deyverdun had settled, and took up his abode with him, the house belonging to the one, and the other defraying the expense of the establishment. A year elapsed before the change, the want of his books, and the renewal of his long interrupted acquaintance with his Lausanne friends allowed

him to resume his habits of regular work. Some considerable time was also spent in determining whether when distributing his matter on so various and often confused a subject he should follow the chronological order of events, or "groupe the picture by nations," and he wisely preferred the latter course. He then began to work diligently, and finished the fifth volume in less than two years, the sixth, and last, in thirteen months. He must be himself allowed to describe the conclusion of his arduous labours.

"It was," he says, "on the day, or rather the night of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several walks in a berceau, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent."—"I will not," he adds, "dissemble the first emotions of joy on recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatever might be the future date of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." ('Life,' ch. x.)

He returned for a few months to London, in order to superintend the publication of the last volumes. During this visit he lived, both in Sussex and London, in the family of Lord Sheffield, which had in some sort become his own. He remained a few weeks after the publication on his fifty-first birth-day, 27th April, 1788, for which coincidence it was deferred a little while—a strange arrangement, certainly, when the expediency of despatch had been so strongly felt as to require nine sheets a-week from the printer and three

thousand copies of each. Before he left England he had full notice of the storm which the infidel tendency and, still more, the indecency of many portions of the last three volumes, raised against him. To the former charge he had been accustomed, and he was prepared for it; but he expresses much surprise at the second, a surprise not greater than that of his reader, provided he be also a reader of the History.

His return to Lausanne was saddened by the deplorable condition in which he found his friend Deyverdun, reduced by repeated strokes of apoplexy to a state that made a prolongation of his life not desirable either for himself or for those to whom he was dear. At his death, a year after, he was found to have given Gibbon by his will the option of purchasing the house and garden, or of holding it for life at an easy price; and he preferred the latter arrangement, which allowed him with prudence to lay out a considerable sum in improvements. To Deyverdun, whose loss left him solitary when he had been accustomed to domestic comfort, there succeeded in his friendship and intimacy the family of the Severys; but though their intercourse was close, and their meeting daily, he sighed over the loss of a domestic society still more constant. His chief enjoyment continued to be in his books; nor does his time during the latter years of his life appear to have hung heavy on his hands. The society of Lausanne was select and agreeable; his circumstances were easy for the scale of expense in that country, and must have been improved by the sale of his History, though he nowhere gives us any intimation of the sums which he received, and his editor Lord Sheffield has not supplied the omission; but he probably was about the wealthiest person in Lausanne, and could indulge, as he liked to indulge, in the pleasures of a constant though modest hospitality. Occasional visits of strangers varied the scene; and such as were distinguished, from what country soever, failed not to

present themselves at his house. He describes the visit of Prince Henry of Prussia in autumn, 1784, as having proved "both flattering from his affability, and entertaining from his conversation." A yet more illustrious name occurs in his account of 1788, when "Mr. Fox, escaped from the bloody tumult of the Westminster election, gave him two days of his free and private society." From ten in the morning to ten at night they passed their time together. The conversation never flagged for a moment; there was little of politics in it, but he gave such a character of Pitt as one great man should give of another, his rival. Of books they talked much, from the History to Homer and the 'Arabian Nights;' much about the country and about "my garden," says Gibbon, "which he understands far better than I do."—Let us dwell on the picture he has sketched with truth of one of the most amiable of great men:—"He seemed to feel and to envy the happiness of my situation, while I admired the powers of a superior man, as they are blended in his attractive character with the softness and simplicity of a child. Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood."*

This sketch, which adorns the 'Life,' is shaded by a dark touch or two in the 'Correspondence.' He cries out loudly against the female accompaniment of the great statesman's travels; asks if Fox will never learn the importance of character, and, strangely enough, contrasts him with his other friend of lesser fame cer-

* The likeness would be improved by substituting pride for vanity, but still more by leaving both substantives out. It was the saying of Fox himself, that "praise was good for the Fox family;" but such portion of this weakness as he had was of a very harmless, inoffensive, even amiable cast. Another littleness of the kind was his love of great people, agreeably to the aristocratic propensities of Whigs. He would speak amusingly enough of "*my* friend the Duke of this," and "*my* friend Lord that," when designating persons whose title to the distinction rested on their place in the peerage almost alone.

tainly, though of more correct demeanour, Sylvester Douglas, afterwards Lord Glenbervie, who had in consequence left behind him an universally favourable impression. On Fox, he says, "the people gazed as on a prodigy, but he showed little inclination to converse with them;" and Gibbon adds, that "the scandalous impropriety of showing his mistress to all Europe" had given much offence.

During the two or three following years, the French Revolution drove a number, he says "a swarm," of emigrants to Switzerland, and Lausanne was so filled with them that he describes the "narrow habitations of the town and country as occupied by the first names and titles of the departed monarchy." Among others were the Duc de Guignes and Maréchal de Castries; but Malesherbes, the Grammonts, Mounier, formerly President of the National Assembly, and Lally-Tollendal, were those whom he allowed to cultivate his acquaintance. The Prince de Condé and Calonne passed through Lausanne in 1790 on their way to Italy, but he was confined with the gout and another disorder, by which he afterwards fell. The celebrated adversary of Calonne, however, M. Necker, he visited that year at his chateau of Coppet, near Geneva. "I could have wished," says Gibbon, "to have shown him as a warning to aspiring youth possessed with the dæmon of ambition. With all the means of present happiness in his power, he is the most miserable of human beings; the past, the present, and the future are equally odious to him. When I suggested some domestic amusement of books, building, &c., he answered with a deep tone of despair, 'Dans l'état où je suis je ne puis sentir que le coup de vent qui m'a abattu.'" Well may Gibbon add, "how different from the constant cheerfulness with which our poor friend Lord North supported his fall." The lover of Mlle. Curchod, not unnaturally, nor yet very tenderly, or even politely, adverts to Mme. Necker's

mode of supporting the common calamity which had exiled to their own country, from one which they had grossly misgoverned, a wealthy, a learned family, that affected the station of philosophers. "She maintains more external composure, mais le diable n'y perd rien." There follows a fair and somewhat favourable character of this weak man. Anything more humble than the figure he makes in Gibbon's somewhat caricatured sketch can hardly be conceived. The year after he again visited Coppet frequently; and he found Necker's spirits much restored, especially since the publication of his last book, not the 'Bonheur des Sots,' his cleverest work, but probably his answer to Calonne's 'Compte Rendu.'

On the French Revolution Gibbon frequently expresses his strong opinion and warm feelings in perfect accordance with those of Burke; of whom he says, "I admire his eloquence, I approve his politics, I adore his chivalry, and I can almost excuse his reverence for church establishments." Even when Burke's violence had spurned all bounds of moderation, we find the historian, in reference to the famous debate of May, 1791, in his letters exclaiming, "Poor Burke is the most eloquent and rational madman that I ever knew. I love Fox's feelings, but I doubt the political principles of the man and of the party."

In 1791 Lord Sheffield's family paid him a visit, passing some time with him at Lausanne, where they found him settled in an excellent house and handsome garden, commanding a beautiful view of the lake and the Alps, and the well-cultivated, well-wooded country in the foreground. They were most hospitably received by him and introduced to the pleasant and select society of the place and of the French emigrants, a society in which the historian was the principal person, and was the object of universal respect and esteem. They found him so much under the impression already adverted to respecting the danger of

revolution, that he seriously argued in favour of the Lisbon Inquisition, saying, "he would not at the present moment give up even that old establishment." Well might he call Burke a rational madman! Possibly the compliment might not have been returned.

During the next year the French fever had spread into Switzerland, and he found the society of Lausanne greatly affected by it. "Never did he know any place so much changed in a year." The storm, however, blew over as far as the Pays de Vaud was concerned, and beyond some arrests for meditated insurrection, nothing took place to disturb the public tranquillity. He therefore deferred for another year the visit which he had promised his friends, with whom he was to have passed twelve months after their return to England. At first the long journey in his infirm state of health made him dread the undertaking; then the apprehension of disturbances in Lausanne induced him to defer his departure. Afterwards he found those fears groundless; but a more serious danger lowered in the month of October, from the French occupying Savoy under General Montesquieu, and threatening the Helvetian territory. Geneva required the stipulated aid of Berne, and above eleven thousand men, in aid of three thousand Genevese, occupied the neighbourhood of Coppet and Nyon. A convention was concluded, securing the independence of the little republic at the end of October; and the Pays de Vaud being thus for the present secured from attack, Gibbon no longer contemplated the necessity of abandoning his library and garden, and of seeking shelter in Zurich or Constance.

It is singular enough, and sufficiently characteristic of those times, that General Montesquieu one evening, immediately after signing the convention, suddenly entered the room where the Neckers were, at Rolle, whither they had fled on account of Mme. de Staël's approaching confinement. He had run away from his victorious army in consequence of a decree against

him by the Convention; and orders having been given to secure him, alive or dead, he fled through Switzerland into Germany, intending possibly by a circuitous route, to reach shelter in England. He was succeeded by Kellermann, and the fears of the Swiss returned. A few days, however, restored peace and security to the minds of all at Lausanne. Savoy was erected into the Département du Mont-Blanc; Geneva was revolutionized and summoned a Convention to meet. The wealthier inhabitants retired to the Pays de Vaud, where all apprehensions of attack or of insurrection had subsided at the beginning of 1793.

In these circumstances Gibbon's promised visit to Lord Sheffield would have been in all probability still postponed, but for an unfortunate event in his friend's family—his wife's death—and his writing to require consolation and support under this loss. Gibbon behaved most admirably on the occasion, for he lost no time in setting out upon a long, very inconvenient, and somewhat perilous journey round the French frontier, though in a state of body little fit for undergoing such fatigue. He had some years before suffered from erysipelas, which had left a swelling in the legs. He had been visited with a severe fit of the gout in 1791, and again the following year; but his chief infirmity was a very unwieldy rupture, which all who saw him perceived, but which he himself most unaccountably never supposed any one could be aware of, and never had mentioned in the slightest way either to any medical man or even to his valet-de-chambre. The death of his friend Severy, after a long illness, had likewise indisposed him to any exertion. Yet with all these difficulties to struggle against, he manfully set out about the month of May, and, after a tedious and circuitous journey by Frankfort and Brussels, reached Ostend at the end of that month, and Sheffield House in London a few days after. There, and at Sheffield Place in Sussex, he remained during the summer,

excepting only a visit to Mrs. Gibbon at Bath, and one to Lord Spencer at Althorp in October.

He came to London early in November. He now found it necessary to consult physicians, and it being ascertained that he had hydrocele as well as hernia, the operation of puncturing was performed. Under this, which is not considered painful, nor if the only complaint, dangerous, he showed great cheerfulness, making jokes with the operator during the time. No less than four quarts of fluid were taken off, and as he had no fever he was able to go out in a few days, though the tumour continued of about half its former size, owing to the other malady. The water immediately began to form again; a second operation was necessary—it was performed Nov. 24, and it proved much more painful than the first. His letters continued as gay as usual; and he announced his intention of going to Sheffield Place in a few days. He visited Lord Auckland in Kent; he returned to dine with the Chancellor, (Lord Loughborough,) and met there Mr. Pitt, with Burke and Windham; and before the middle of December he reached Lord Sheffield's. While there he was observed to be exceedingly changed, though in London, a few days before, his conversation had been as lively and animated as ever. He moved about with difficulty; he often retired to his room; the formation of water again showed itself; his appetite began to fail; and he observed, it was a bad sign with him when he could not eat at breakfast—the only desponding expression that escaped him. Fever now made its appearance, and Lord Sheffield recommended his removal to London, where he went by a very painful journey on the 6th of January. Two days after, Lord Sheffield joined him, and a third operation relieved him of six quarts. His spirits were revived by this relief, and when his friend left town, he reckoned upon being able to go out in a day or two; but on the 15th he was taken violently ill in the night, and he died the

following day, 16th January, 1794. Two days before, he had received the visit of Lady Spencer and her mother Lady Lucan; and on the next day he rose and saw several friends, with whom conversing as late as five in the evening, the talk fell on a favourite topic with him, the probable duration of his life, which he fixed at ten years at least, perhaps twelve, and perhaps twenty. In less than two hours he became drowsy, passed an exceedingly bad night, and though in the morning he found himself better and got up, he was persuaded to retire again into his bed, in which he expired before one o'clock. His servant said, that he never at any time appeared to have supposed himself in danger, unless his desiring to see Mr. Darell, his solicitor, might be considered to indicate some such feeling. He was buried in Lord Sheffield's vault at Hitching, in Sussex, and an epitaph in Latin was inscribed on his tomb, the composition of Dr. Parr, and describing his style with more discrimination than is to be found in many of that experienced lapidary writer's compositions. "Copiosum, splendidum, concinnum orbe verborum, et summo artificio distinctum orationis genus, reconditæ exquisitæque sententiæ."

It remains before considering the historical merits of Gibbon, that some account be given of his personal qualities, beyond that which has incidentally been drawn from the opinions of Suard and Deffand. His honourable and amiable disposition, his kind and even temper was praised by all, displayed as it was in the steadiness of his friendships, and the generosity of his conduct towards Deyverdun, and indeed all who needed whatever help his circumstances enabled him to give. Perhaps the warmth of his affection was yet more strikingly exemplified in his steady attachment to his kind aunt, Miss Porten, and towards his venerable stepmother, who survived him. Nor can any just exception be taken to his political conduct when in Parliament, the personal friend as he was of Lord North, and the con-

scientious approver of his measures. If he joined in the Coalition which made shipwreck of all the parties to it, he only erred with far greater politicians, and might well plead his habitual respect and esteem for his leader as the justification of joining in his fatal mistake.

He never was more than a silent spectator of those great and fierce struggles. He appears early to have felt that his talents were not adapted to public speaking, an error which many able and even highly gifted men fall into from not being aware how much the faculty of thinking on his legs, is an acquisition of habit to any man of tolerable abilities, who will devote himself to gain a faculty, beyond most others, bearing a premium disproportioned to its real merits in every free country. He repeatedly endeavoured to overcome his repugnance, and to risk the consequences of a failure, which after all would only have continued the silence he condemned himself to. As often as he came near the point, he shrank back, saying, it "was more tremendous than he had imagined—the great speakers filled him with despair, the bad ones with terror." Afterwards, on again coming near the task, he recoils, as he says, not for want of preparation and of matter, but "from dread of exposing himself." This personal vanity, then, finally condemned him to silence—or as he says, "he remained in his seat safe but inglorious." He would not take the chance of success which would have greatly exalted him, for fear by failing he should remain where he was. He refused to take a gratis ticket in the political lottery, where he might have gained by the adventure, and could not possibly lose, unless, indeed, his vanity might have been mortified for nine days by men citing his failure.

His colloquial powers were by all accounts of a high order, but certainly not of the highest; for he was careful of his expressions to the pitch of pedantry; his remarks came as if prepared for the press; his wit

was equally precise, and his manner was strongly tinged with affectation. Great resources of information, and as much readiness of argument, and remark, and sally, as his conceit would allow to appear, ministered to the staple of his talk. Sir James Mackintosh, in reference to Gibbon's powers of conversation was wont to say, that he might have been cut out of a corner of Burke's mind, without being missed. I say in reference to his powers of conversation; though Mr. Green who relates the anecdote, considers the application of the remark as having been general. But Sir James far better knew the merit of Gibbon, and the value of his great work, than thus to compare him generally with Burke—whose whole writings, excellent as they are for some qualities, will never stand nearly so high in the estimation of mankind, either for profound learning or for various usefulness, as the 'Decline and Fall.'

His letters have the faults of his conversation; they are not easy or natural; all is constrained, all for effect. No one can suppose in reading them that a word would have been changed, had the writer known they were to be published the morning after he despatched them, and had sent them to the printing-office instead of the post-office.

The external appearance of Gibbon was extremely ungraceful and forbidding. In his early years his figure was very small and slender, but his head disproportionately large. In after life his whole form was changed, and his large head and barely human features, seemed better adapted to the bulk into which his body had swelled. By far the best picture of him and of his conversation is given by Colman, whom Mr. Croker copies in a note to his invaluable edition of Boswell's Johnson, (vol. i. p. 121.) "The learned Gibbon was a curious counterbalance to the learned, (may I not say the *less* learned?*) Johnson. Their

* It really is singular to see any kind of doubt expressed on this by any one who had ever heard either author.

manners and tastes both in writing and in conversation were as different as their habiliments. On the day I first sat down with Johnson, in his rusty brown suit, and his black worsted stockings, Gibbon was placed opposite to me in a suit of flowered velvet, with a bag and sword. Each had his measured phraseology; and Johnson's famous parallel between Dryden and Pope might be loosely parodied in reference to himself and Gibbon. Johnson's style was grand, and Gibbon's elegant; the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, and the polish of the latter was sometimes finical. Johnson marched to kettledrums and trumpets, Gibbon moved to flutes and hautboys; Johnson hewed passages through the Alps, while Gibbon levelled walks through parks and gardens. Mauled as I had been by Johnson, Gibbon poured balm upon my bruises, by condescending once or twice in the course of the evening to talk with me. The great historian was light and playful, suiting his matter to the capacity of the boy; but it was done *more suo;* still his manner prevailed, still he tapped his snuff-box, still he smiled and smiled, and rounded his periods with the same air of good breeding as if he were conversing with men. His mouth, mellifluous as Plato's, was a round hole nearly in the centre of his visage."

We are now in the last place to consider Gibbon as an historian, and in considering the nature and estimating the merits of his great work, the first thing that naturally requires our attention is the plan. In the subject, as he has defined or rather extended it, there is manifestly a remarkable defect. There is no correctness in representing the decline of the Roman Empire as having lasted from the age immediately following that of the Antonines, at the end of the second century, to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in the middle of the fifteenth—a period of nearly thirteen hundred years. It is true that the seat of power had been transferred from Italy to the

confines of Asia; but in order to make the Roman Empire survive for six centuries and a half the destruction of the Western Empire, it becomes necessary to regard, and the author does accordingly regard, Charlemagne as having formed a new empire in the west, and his successors, first of the Carlovingian race and then of the Capetian, as governing the Roman Empire. Indeed, the unity of the subject, and its clear limitation, would have been more perfectly maintained by making the History terminate with the subversion of the Western Empire by the conquest of Rome in the beginning of the sixth century. The subject, as it has been continued far beyond the original design, is, therefore, wanting in unity; it is not so much the decline and fall of the Roman Empire as the history of the whole world for the first fourteen or fifteen centuries of the Christian era.

In order to keep some order and arrangement in a subject so vast and various, it becomes necessary either to follow strictly the order of time in relating successive events—or to group those events, and chiefly by the countries which were the scenes of them—or to adopt a middle course and to treat chronologically the events of each group. Gibbon has, generally speaking, taken this third line, and has pursued it with much skill and felicity. But he has also adopted occasionally other principles of distribution, and has collected all the events relating to some important subject, as the rise or downfall of a religious sect, and has given these events as the general history of that subject. To this course, however, there are objections. It was not judicious to separate from the general history of Constantine an event so important in its influence, both on his own fortunes and on the condition of his empire, as his conversion to Christianity, making it instead of Paganism the established religion of the Roman world. One consequence, among others, of this separation is, that the historical

reader can hardly recognize Constantine's identity or that of his most famous victory, "the battle of the standard,"* by which he took Rome and established his fortune.—Another consequence is, that had the History ended with the first publication, comprising the first sixteen chapters, the reader would have been left wholly ignorant of the most important part of Constantine's reign, although the narrative had extended over two-thirds of that reign, and incomparably the most material as well as the largest portion of it.—It is a third consequence that his religious history, being reserved for a separate narrative, is blended with the establishment of the Christian religion, which was only fully effected during the century after his decease; and thus the general narrative breaks off in the middle of Julian's reign and of the fourth century: then the ecclesiastical history goes back to the beginning of that century and continues to the middle of the fifth; and lastly the general narrative, thus interrupted, is again taken up where it left off in Julian's reign. Thus, too, the history of Mahomet and his immediate successors is given apart from that of their conquests. The reigns of the six caliphs who conquered Persia, Syria, Egypt, and part of Africa, are all given, though shortly; and no one, to read the chapter containing that history (the fiftieth), would ever suspect that any of them, not even Omar and Ali and Othman, had ever drawn a sword, though the rise of their religion had been related, and even its peculiar doctrines described, and though that history covered a period of half a century (632 to 680). Hence anticipation and repetition, or the choice between these and obscurity, becomes unavoidable. Other defects of a like description may be found out in the design; but it must on all hands be admitted,

* There is no mention whatever even of the word *Labarum* in the first publication. It occurs not under the head of the battle, but in the 20th chapter, which gives the religious history of the empire.

that the extraordinary nature of the subject, its many scattered parts, its consisting of so much that possesses no interest, and yet is not easy to omit, with so much which, though interesting, is of most difficult arrangement and compression, interposed obstacles all but insuperable to the composition of a work having any pretensions to either unity or method,—and the historian has been always most justly praised for having approached as near as could reasonably be expected to a perfection of impossible attainment.

The great merit of Gibbon is his extraordinary industry, and the general fidelity of his statements, as attested by the constant references which he makes to his numerous and varied authorities—references which enabled the "most faithful of historians"* to ascertain clearly their accuracy, that is, the truth of his narrative. This is the very first virtue of the historical character; and that merit, therefore, is fully possessed by Gibbon. In it he is the worthy rival of Robertson, and in it he forms a remarkable contrast to Hume.

The next great merit of Gibbon is the judgment with which he weighs conflicting authorities, and the freedom with which he rejects improbable relations. His sagacity is remarkable; and his attention seems ever awake. When we consider the obscurity in which many events during the dark ages are necessarily shrouded, nay, even the multitude of obscure actors on the turbulent and varied scenes—persons whom he yet was not at liberty to pass over—this praise, so generally accorded to him, becomes the more flattering, in proportion as the task was the more difficult of following scanty and uncertain lights, and describing strange but oftentimes mean transactions. His most distinguished translator and commentator, after, at one time, doubting his general accuracy and powers of discrimination, has confessed,

* Robertson. See his letter on the publication of the first volume. That great writer had diligently traced the author's references.

upon a more careful perusal, with a constant reference to his authorities, that he had judged him too severely, and has done ample justice, as well to "his power of judicious discrimination" (*justesse d'esprit*) "as to the immensity of his researches and the variety of his knowledge."*

The third excellence of the work is its varied learning, distributed in the vast body of notes which accompany the text, and which contain no small portion of a critical abstract, serving for a *catalogue raisonné*, of the works referred to in the page. Though many of these notes are somewhat flippant, and some are far from decent, they form, perhaps, the most striking, certainly the most entertaining part of the work.

It must, lastly, be allowed, that the narrative is as lucid as the confused nature of the subject will admit; and that, whatever defects may be ascribed to it, there is nothing tiring or monotonous, nothing to prevent the reader's attention from being kept ever awake. When the nature of the subject is considered, perhaps there may some doubt arise, if the chaster style of Livy, of Robertson, or even of Hume, could have rendered this story as attractive as Gibbon's manner, singularly free from all approach to monotony, though often deviating widely from simplicity and nature.

These are, truly, excellences of a high, some of them excellences of the highest order, and all possessed by Gibbon in an ample measure—patient industry, general fidelity, sagacious discrimination, jealous vigilance in detecting error and falsehood, various, profound, and accurate learning, all combined to produce a history, which, with eminent clearness unravels a perplexed and obscure subject, but one of extreme importance, and which gives in a connected view the transition from former ages to our own, uniting, as has been happily observed,† by a kind of bridge the

* Guizot. Preface. † Milman's Preface.

story of the ancient and the modern world. It would be difficult for more of the virtues of a great historian to unite in the same person.

But great vices also fell to his share. Has tantas viri virtutes ingentia vitia æquabant. (Liv. xxi. ch. 4.) He never attained, with all his practice, the first quality of the historical style, and which goes deeper than the mere manner, the power of narrative. The story does not flow smoothly along; its course is interrupted; it wants unity, being broken down into fragments. It is almost as much argumentative as narrative. But above all it fails in the very first quality of narrative; it does not assume the ignorance of the reader and relate things in their order, proceeding from what has been told or explained to what remains undisclosed. Now this is the most essential quality of all didactic compositions, and for the present purpose every work is didactic. Whether a science is to be unfolded, or an argument to be enforced, or a story to be told, nothing should be anticipated, nothing assumed to be known before it has been propounded. Now Gibbon constantly seems to assume that his reader knows the subject, and continually alludes to what has yet to be brought before him. It is a part of this defect, indeed it is the main cause of this defect, that he is generally observing upon matters rather than plainly recounting them. Numberless instances might be given of these anticipations and assumptions; not a few of his leaving out the facts and losing himself in the remarks. One or two may suffice rather as explaining than as proving those positions, to which all Gibbon's readers must assent.—There is nothing more elaborate than his history of Alexander Severus; yet two references are made to his death, and one of them is made the subject of a general inference, at a considerable distance from the account of his murder, afterwards given (chap. VII.); a long digression on the finances of the empire, as well as a history of Maximin, being inter-

posed between these allusions and the narrative of the death. A great and just panegyric is delivered of Papinian, the greatest lawyer and statesman of his age, and prime minister of the Emperor Caracalla.* His death is said to have caused general sorrow; but we are never told that he died, or how, and can only conjecture as most likely that the tyrant put him to death for nobly refusing to follow Seneca's example and defend parricide. (Chap. VI.)—So too in the same chapter, a minuter account with some statements, and especially some notes that might have been spared, is given of the monster Elagabalus. We are told that he sent his portrait to Rome before he marched thither in person. But the important event of his going there is altogether left out, and we only know it by being afterwards told of his conduct in the capital.—Speaking of the war of Honain, he mentions the confederacy of Tayef as a thing already described and known to the reader, yet it never had even been alluded to. (Chap. L.)

All this proceeds from the false notion which Gibbon seems to have formed of a dignified style. He will not condescend to be plain: he forgets that the very business of the historian is to relate the history of events as they happened. He must always shine; but labouring for effect, he wholly omits the obvious consideration that relief is absolutely necessary to produce it; and forgets that a strong unbroken light may dazzle without pleasing, or may shine rather than illuminate, and that a broad glare may be as confused and uninteresting as darkness itself. The main fault of his style is the perpetual effort which it discloses. Hume may have concealed his art better than Robertson, yet the latter is ever at his entire ease, while Gibbon is ever in the attitudes of the Academy; he is almost agonistic. He can tell nothing in plain terms, un-

* So Gibbon makes him. He appears, however, to have been dismissed from his office of *Præfectus Prætorio* some time before.

adorned with figure, unseasoned with epigram and point. Much tinsel is the result; many a puerile ornament; many a gaudy allusion. But the worst consequence of the erroneous theory, after the fatal effect of spoiling the narrative and making the story be told by allusion and hint rather than historically, is that it leads to no small obscurity in the diction. This great historian furnishes an example of the style so much in favour with some inferior writers of a later date, the ænigmatical. Forgetting that the use of language is to disclose our thoughts, they seem rather to adopt the politic cardinal's notion that speech was given us to conceal them, and accordingly they seem at the end of each fine sentence as if they cried in a tone of defiance, "Find me out the meaning of that!" Of course the proverbial servility of imitators has since gone very far beyond the earlier examples in Tacitus, Montesquieu, and Gibbon. Yet the latter has innumerable passages at which we guess long ere we can be sure of their sense. Another consequence of the determination to pursue the same stately march on all occasions is, that the most common things being wrapt up in the same dignified or adorned language, the matter, beside eluding for some time our apprehension, forms a contrast so ludicrous with the manner, that somewhat of ridicule is produced when the sense is well ascertained.

To exemplify these remarks, which must have presented themselves to all readers, there needs only the opening of the book at almost any page.—He has to state that instead of following the political divisions of the Turkish Empire, he means to be guided by natural boundaries; but this is too plain: "Instead of following the arbitrary divisions of despotism and ignorance,* it will be safer as well as more agreeable to observe the indelible characters of nature." Then comes,

* This is not an intelligible word here.

instead of a simple geographical description of boundaries, a very violent figure representing the countries as in motion, or as gushing out. "The name of Asia Minor* is attributed with some propriety to the peninsula which, confined betwixt the Euxine and the Mediterranean, advances from the Euphrates towards Europe," (ch. I.)—When he has simply to say, that Sardinia and Sicily form two kingdoms in Italy, it is, "Two Italian sovereigns assume a regal title from Sardinia and Sicily," (ch. I.)—When he has to mention the simple fact that there were three great lawyers of the name of Scævola, it is "The kindred appellation of Mucius Scævola, was illustrated by three sages of the law," (ch. XLIV.)—Who without much thought can descry that the following sentence means to state the circumstance of the Western Ocean being called the Atlantic? "The western parts of Africa are intersected by the branches of Mount Atlas, a *name* so idly *celebrated* by the fancy of poets, but which is now diffused over the immense ocean that rolls between the ancient and the new continent," (ch. IV.)—So inveterate had this habit of writing become, that when relating the ordinary events of his own life, or describing the circumstances of his family, we find him equally moving upon stilts as when recounting the fortunes of the Western or the Eastern Empire. He is telling that the Gibbons had been city traders; and he says that in their days, "before our army and navy, our civil establishment, and India empire had opened so many paths of fortune, the mercantile profession was more frequently chosen by youths of a liberal race and education who aspired to create their own independence. Our most respectable families have not disdained the counting-house, or even the shop; and in England as well as in the Italian commonwealths, heralds have been compelled to declare that gentility is not degraded by the exercise of trade." (Life, *sub in.*)

* Why not "given?"

Such a style is prone to adopt false and mixed metaphors, and falls naturally into obscurity. The great original of it, Tacitus, is a constant example of the latter vice; but Gibbon added a defect not to be found in his model, or in the other object of his admiration, Montesquieu: he is very often incorrect, sometimes from desire of making the sense of words bend to the balance of a period, or the turn of an epigram, sometimes from mere carelessness or neglect.—"They addressed the Pontiff to dispel their scruples, and absolve their promises," (ch. XLIX.) Dispel is not the correct word applied to scruples, but to doubts; and absolving a promise is wholly senseless; but "absolve them from a promise," is plainly rejected because it would have interrupted the symmetry, which some would call the jingle.—So he makes the Emperor (ch. XVI.) not pity, but "abhor the sufferings of the persecuted sect," instead of the cruelty of the persecutors. —From the same motive, speaking of Maximin's cruelty and superstition, he makes "the former suggest the means, the latter point out the objects of persecution:" (ch. XVI.) now cruelty can never suggest means, it can only induce the adoption of them, and superstition might just as well suggest means as objects.—Again, speaking of the numbers of the empire and its public works, he says, "The observation of the number and greatness of its cities will serve to confirm the former, and to multiply the latter," (ch. II.): as if any observation of works could increase their number; but then the accurate phrase "to extend our belief in the number of the latter," would have spoilt the symmetry and sound of the period.

The historian's language, however, abounds in phrases indolently adopted without any regard to the real meaning of words, and not to serve any purpose of preserving symmetry or obtaining point.—Thus "human industry corrected the deficiencies of nature," (ch. II.) instead of supplied.—So "the life of the

founder *supplies* the silence of his written revelation;" (ch. L.) instead of supplies the deficiencies, or speaks when the writings are silent.—"Genius and learning served to *harmonize* the soul of Longinus," (ch. XII.)—"Two circumstances have been universally mentioned, which *insinuate* that the treatment," &c., (ch. XVI.)—Again, "History, which undertakes to record the transactions of the past, for the instruction of future ages, would ill *deserve* that honourable office, if," &c., (ch. XVI.) instead of "execute" or "perform."—"Fraud is the resource of weakness." No one doubts it; but he adds, "and cunning,"—which is, in fact, either fraud or the immediate cause of it; and no one can correctly say that fraud is its resource, (ch. XLIX.)

Sometimes, in quest of a fine word, he says something which he does not mean.—"If we *annihilate* the interval of time and space between Augustus and Charles IV.;" (ch. L.) but he only means, "if we pass over that interval."—"A casting vote was *ascribed* to the superior wisdom of Papinian;" (ch. XLIV.) but he only means, that it was given to Papinian on account of his "wisdom," while he says that Papinian's wisdom was understood to have invented the casting vote.—"The fragments of the Greek kingdom in Europe and Asia I shall *abandon* to the Turkish arms;" (ch. LXVIII.) but he only means, that he gives up the history of the empire after those arms had conquered it. A greater artist marks his course, and connects himself with his subject after a very different fashion:—"Me quoque juvat," says Livy, on closing the Punic wars, "velut ipse in parte laboris ac periculi fuerim, ad finem belli Punici pervenisse. Nam, etsi profiteri ausum perscripturum res omnes Romanas, in partibus singulis tanti operis fatigari minime conveniat, tamen quum in mentem venit tres et sexaginta annos æque multa volumina occupasse mihi quam occuparint quadringenti octoginta octo anni a conditâ Urbe ad Ap. Claudium Consulem qui primus bellum Carthaginiensibus intulit; jam pro-

video animo, velut que proximis littori vadis inducti mare pedibus ingrediuntur, quidquid progredior in vastiorem me altitudinem ac velut profundum invehi et crescere pæne opus quod prima quæque perficiendo minui videbatur." (Lib. xxxi., cap. 1.)

There are few instances in his statements of the same carelessness which we have marked in his style; but some there are,—as when he makes the number of Roman citizens, at the beginning of the Social War, 463,000 fighting men, which answers to a population of at least two, perhaps of nearer four millions. (ch. II.) It is, however, rather strange, that one so accustomed to weigh historical evidence, so little apt to be seduced by mere authority, and so prone to set the probabilities of any narrative against the weight of its author, should always have shut his eyes to the gross improbability of the commonly received history of Rome in the earlier ages, and should have followed blindfold the guidance of what any Latin writer, from national vanity, or prejudice, or superstition, happened to relate. We may remember having seen him plume himself on defending the authenticity of those poetical fictions as pure history in his juvenile work. The same implicit faith in their authenticity followed him to the end of his career, although Beaufort's excellent work had long claimed the regard, and indeed obtained the assent of inquiring minds; and the subsequently promulgated doctrines of Niebuhr and Wachsmüth had been very fully anticipated before any part of the 'Decline and Fall' was written.

The greatest charge against Gibbon's historical character remains: he wrote under the influence of a deeply rooted prejudice, and a prejudice upon the most important of all subjects—the religion of his age and nation. I speak not of the too famous description in which the progress of Christianity is ascribed to second causes, that no doubt operated most powerfully to its general acceptance and dissemination. The

most orthodox believer might subscribe to his theory, nay, might have taken the self-same view of the subject. There is great truth, too, in his remarks upon the exaggerated accounts of early persecution, and some foundation for the circumstances urged in extenuation of the conduct held by heathen authorities towards the new sect. But there runs a vein of sneering and unfair insinuation always against Christians and their faith through the whole both of those inquiries and other portions of ecclesiastical history, especially the religious transactions of Constantine, nay, through almost every part of the work in which any opportunity is afforded by the subject, or can be made often by pretty forcible means—any opportunity of gratifying a disposition eminently uncharitable, wholly unfair, and tinged with prejudices quite unworthy of a philosopher, and altogether alien to the character of an historian. Nor is the charge lessened, but rather aggravated, by the pretence constantly kept up of his being a believer, when any reader of the most ordinary sagacity at once discovers that he is an unrelenting enemy of the Christian name. Nothing can be more discreditable to the individual, nothing, above all, more unworthy the historian, than this subterfuge, resorted to for the purpose of escaping popular odium. All men of right feelings must allow that they would far more have respected an open adversary, who comes forward to the assault with a manly avowal of his disbelief, than they can a concealed but bitter enemy who assumes the garb of an ally, in order to screen himself and injure more effectually the cause he affects to defend.

To give instances of the unfairness which I have, in common with all Gibbon's readers, condemned, would be too easy not to prove superfluous. But the sixteenth chapter must for ever be, in an especial manner, a monument of his gross injustice or incurable prejudice. The eagerness with which he seizes on

every circumstance to extenuate the dreadful persecutions that admit of no defence, is in the highest degree discreditable, both to his honesty and his sound judgment. He purposely begins with Nero, and so leaves out the persecutions recorded in Scripture. His account of Cyprian's martyrdom is as unfair as it could be without deceit and positive falsehood—casting a veil over all the most horrible atrocities practised on that amiable and innocent personage, and magnifying into acts of clemency exercised towards him every insignificant attention that was paid him—perverting, too, the truth of history, in order to feign circumstances which really do not appear vouched by any kind of authority. But nothing can be more preposterous than the elaborate description which he gives of the comforts derived by the sufferers in these cruel scenes from the glory of martyrdom, and from the great preference which they must have given it over the disgrace of apostacy. The twofold object of this strange discourse is at once to lower the sufferer's merit and extenuate his oppressor's guilt. Nor is there any kind of persecution for conscience' sake to which the same remarks are not equally applicable. It is a much lesser offence, though the passage is not undeserving of notice, as exhibiting the force of his prejudices, and the errors into which they lead him while descanting on his favourite topic, the "mild spirit of polytheism," that when, in describing Diocletian's general persecution, he has occasion to mention a Christian who had torn down the imperial proclamation, accompanying the act with expressions of "hatred and contempt towards all such tyrannical governors," the historian shows at once his prejudice against Christianity and his ignorance of law, by declaring this offence to be punishable "as treason by the mildest laws." He adds, that his being a person of rank aggravated the guilt; and relates, without a single expression of disapproval, that the man "was burnt, or rather roasted

by a slow fire, every refinement of cruelty being exhausted without altering the steady smile which remained on his countenance." The only remark made on the excutioners is of an extenuating nature; they were, it seems, "zealous to revenge the personal insult which had been offered to the Emperor." The smile of the patient sufferer is termed "a steady and insulting smile;" and the Christians are sneered at for "the excessive commendations which they lavished on the memory of their hero and martyr." Gibbon's clerical adversaries would have fared much better in their conflict with him had they dwelt rather upon such passages as these, in which he stands self-convicted either of almost incurable prejudice or of bad faith, and not attempted the hopeless task of charging him with ignorance and with false quotation.

The charge of indecency has often been advanced against Gibbon's 'History,' and by none more severely than by a writer who was combating on his side, in one, at least, of his theological controversies, and a writer whose own verses, any more than his familiar conversation, gave him but little right to make this complaint. Porson* declares that, "Were the 'History' anonymous, he should guess that the shameful obscenities which pervade the whole, but especially the last volumes, were written by some debauchee, who, having, from age or excess, survived the practices of lust, still indulged himself in the luxury of speculation, or exposed the impotent imbecility after he had lost the vigour of passion." This censure is certainly much too sharp, and it is truly astonishing that Gibbon felt it not. Delighted with Porson's alliance against Travis, and pleased with the panegyric of his own diligence and accuracy which the great Grecian had penned, he only says that "the sweetness of his praise is tempered by a reasonable mixture of acid." He also

* 'Letters to Archdeacon Travis.' Preface.

defends himself against the charge of indecency as preferred by others, and his principal argument is the exceedingly feeble, and even doubtful one, that his English text is chaste, and that "all licentious passages are left in the obscurity of a learned language." It is undeniable, however, that, after allowing Porson's invective to be exaggerated, there can be no excuse for some of the notes—as those on Elagabalus, and Mahomet, and Theodora, which throw little, if any, light upon the subject, and only serve to pander for a prurient imagination.

ADDITIONAL APPENDIX

TO

THE LIFE OF VOLTAIRE.

De Voltaire *à M. le Président Hénault.*

A Potsdam, le 15 août 1752.

Vraiment je reconnais toutes vos graces françaises, et toutte la politesse du plus aimable homme de l'Europe, aux galanteries que vous dites à un pédant prussien dans le temps que ce pédant écrit contre vous. Le roy de Prusse vous rend hommage, et moy je vous contredis; vous m'accablez de bontez dans votre gloire, tant vous êtes au-dessus de mes critiques. Cependant vous vous doutez bien, Monsieur, que je suis votre admirateur pour le moins autant que le roy de Prusse. Il vous lit, il vous estime comme il le doit; mais moy je vous lis, je vous étudie et je vous sçai par cœur; jugez donc, s'il vous plaît, avec quel vrai respect je prends la liberté de n'être pas de votre avis sur deux ou trois bagatelles. Comme il y a grande aparence qu'on imprimera tous les ans votre livre qui est le livre de tous les temps, ainsi que vous êtes l'homme de touttes les heures, je vous prie de mettre huit mille hommes au lieu de vingt à la bataille de Narva. Rien n'est plus vray, rien n'est plus connu. Charles XII., avec vingt mille hommes, n'aurait alors rien fait d'extraordinaire en batant quatre-vingt mille sauvages dont la moitié était armée de batons ferrez. Les choses sont bien changées. Les Russes sont devenus formidables, même par la discipline. Je vous demande encore en grace d'adoucir par un *on dit* cette réponse étonnante de Louis XIV. aux très justes remontrances du comte de Stair; car le fruit de la conversation

fut de faire cesser les ouvrages de Mardik, démolis depuis dans la régence.

M. de Gourville assure que M. Fouquet sortit de prison quelque temps avant sa mort. Je me souviens de l'avoir entendu dire à feue madame la duchesse de Sully, sa belle-fille. C'est un bel exemple du peu de cas qu'on fait des malheureux qu'on n'ait jamais sçu où est mort un homme qui avait été presque le maître du royaume. Voylà mes grands griefs contre un livre, où je trouve plus d'anecdotes vraiment intéressantes, plus de connaissance des loix et des mœurs, plus de profondeur, plus de raison et plus de finesse que dans tout ce qu'on a écrit sur l'histoire de France, et cela avec l'air de donner des dattes, des noms et des colonnes.

Il est vray, Monsieur, que vous valez mieux que votre livre, et c'est ce qui fait que je vous regrette, même dans la cour de Marc Aurèle. Je comptais avoir le bonheur de vous revoir incessamment et de faire ma cour à madame du Deffant; mais j'ay bien peur que les charmes de mon héros, et quelques études où je me livre ne m'arrêtent. Plus j'avance dans la carrière de la vie, et plus je trouve le travail nécessaire. Il devient à la longue le plus grand des plaisirs, et tient lieu de touttes les illusions qu'on a perdues. Je vous en souhaitte, des illusions. Adieu, Monsieur, conservez-moy une bonté, une amitié qui est pour moy un bien très réel. Je vous supplie d'ajouter à cette réalité celle de me conserver dans le souvenir de madame du Deffant. Nous n'avons pas icy grand nombre de dames; mais mon Marc Aurèle aurait beau rassembler les plus aimables, il n'en trouverait point comme elle. C'est ce qui fait que nous avons pris notre party de renoncer aux femmes. Je n'ose vous supplier de présenter mes respects à M. le comte d'Argenson. Je ne suis pas homme à luy causer le moindre petit regret; mais il m'en cause beaucoup, et il ne s'en soucie guère. Ne faites pas comme luy. Regardez-moi comme l'habitant du Nord qui vous est le plus attaché.

V.

HELVÉTIUS *à l'abbé le Blanc, chez M. de Buffon, Intendant des Jardins du Roi.*

A Paris, ce 8 décembre.

Eh! voilà justement comme on juge mal des gens. Ne deviez-vous pas être à Paris huit jours après moy? N'ay-je pas été huit jours à la cour? N'ay-je pas dû vous attendre de jours en jours? Ne deviez-vous pas plutôt venir m'embrasser à Paris? Mais enfin vous êtes avec Buffon. En son nom, tout vous est pardonné; il vaut mieux que moy, et tout Paris. En attendant le bonheur de le voir, nous jouissons du plaisir de parler de lui avec Montigny, Cléraut, Maupertuis, M^me^ Duchâtelet. A propos, vous savez la nouvelle aventure de Voltaire; j'en suis au désespoir; car il n'y a pas d'apparence qu'il puisse revenir de sitôt à Paris. Nous avons parlé de vous avec l'abbé Fouchet que je commence à aimer depuis qu'il vous aime. En vérité, j'ai une grande envie de vous revoir, dussions-nous nous arracher les yeux en disputant. Vous me retrouverez de votre avis sur bien des choses que je n'oze encore croire; mais l'occasion démasque les hommes. Adieu; aimez-moi, faites ma cour à M. de Buffon. Je compte sur son amitié, et je crois que je compte bien. Je suis, avec tout l'attachement possible,

Votre très-humble et très-obéissant serviteur,

HELVÉTIUS.

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GLASGOW:
PRINTED BY BELL AND BAIN.

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